ARAVAN DAYS

BERTRAM SMITH

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CARAVAN DAYS

After Labour, Refreshment

Frontispiece

CARAVAN DAYS

BY

BERTRAM SMITH

AUTHOR OF "THE WHOLE ART OF CARAVANNING"
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Shall we make a journey? There's a highway that I know
In a country where the heather meets the sky,
Where the hillsides are ablaze with the bracken's autumn glow.
Shall we make a journey—You and I?

There's a little whispering burn there, running peaty from the hill,
And the shepherd's rich in poultry and in kye:
So you may have poached eggs and batter pudding if you will.
Shall we make a journey—You and I?

You will make the beds, Dear, and I shall make the tea;
And we'll hang our wee bit washing out to dry;
And we'll black our boots for Sunday, though there's no one there to see.
Shall we make a journey—You and I?

And though we may turn homeward when this little journey's done,
There's a gey long road before us, Dear,—forbye.
So take my hand, my Comrade, and we two shall be as one.
Shall we make a journey—You and I?

CARAVAN DAYS

CHAPTER I

WHAT CARAVANNING IS

It is sixteen years since my first caravan Triumvir was built and made her first journey in the county of Cheshire. But although those April days in Delamere Forest made it clear to me that in a caravan I had found the very instrument and provision that I needed, the tour was no very sudden departure for myself or the members of my crew. For I had made many journeys before that, that were free of railways, luggage and hotels. I had travelled often across country with a knapsack, though that was a most imperfect equipment which failed to deal with lodging for the night. And the same is true of sportive go-as-you-please tours in which one had to make one's way from point to point by every means of progression that occurred. But other expedi-

tions were more complete. I used to travel with a tent and pony-cart. I used to go down rivers with a fleet of small punts and make an entrancing little encampment at night upon the bank, every man sleeping in a bale of straw in his own boat, with a tent to cover the whole. And the fact that I have never yet actually driven across Scotland in the sleigh that I built with that end in view must be put down solely to the climate, which has refused me opportunity.

I am not sure that I ought not to go even further back to find the origin of my present zeal for caravanning, in the love of a very small boy for secret habitations of all sorts. For I was not content with caves and man-holes, with the dark corner above the rafters in the hay-loft or the little clearing that I made in the heart of the thicket. Perhaps I took the first decisive step toward the attainment of the caravan SIEGLINDA on the well-remembered day when I set to work to build a house in a tree. It was neatly fitted in, high among the swaying branches, where no grown-up could hope to follow: there I spent golden hours, shut in by sunlit greenery: and it was a heavy blow to me when at last the old holm-oak was felled to make way for a new tennis lawn. Even in SIEGLINDA I doubt if I

have ever quite recaptured all that was lost on that most fateful day.

By degrees my love for caravanning has crowded out all other forms of enterprise and left no room for them. At first I could not have enough of TRIUMVIR. I was in a Liverpool office at that time, but I fled to her precipitately whenever it was possible, and I kept her always in commission, well stocked with clothing and provisions, so that I could reach her at the shortest notice. I made a number of curious little zigzag journeys in those days, a bit at a time, leaving the van just where she happened to be when I had to return and often not rejoining her for many weeks. And at last I took the bull by the horns and camped her permanently by a country railway station, where I settled down and lived in her and travelled back and forward every day.

There has hardly been a summer since then in which I have not been out in a caravan, either in TRIUMVIR or in one of her successors. I have toured in Wales, in the South of England and in Dumfries and Galloway. Sometimes I have set up a stationary camp for a week or two, and once, when SIEGLINDA had been added to the number, I realized my old ambition of laying

out a village of caravans and tents, which housed a considerable population for a fortnight in a meadow by a stream. But until the summer of 1912 I had in reality been wasting my time.

In those early days caravanning was partly an adventure, but chiefly a means of escape. What I wanted was to get away, to harness my horse and drive off, to enter a new world where all my old habits were broken and all my old occupations were suspended. The important matter was not so much what I found before me as what I left behind. I cared very little where I went or indeed whether I travelled or remained in camp. I wandered about at will, toying with alternatives at every cross-road. I had no destination and no reason for travelling North or South, if anything invited me to East or West. I would have no letters or newspapers or maps. I stopped my watch and lost the time of day. All that I wanted was to look for adventure and follow it when found, wherever it might lead. Thus I went lounging about the country, knowing no spur but the spur of the moment. And I fed my sense of freedom by overturning all established times and seasons, going to bed at 2 p.m. or travelling all night and camping at the dawn, taking afternoon tea at midnight or breakfast-

ing in the afternoon. And I got what I wanted, for those were good days, rich in glowing memories.

But caravanning means something quite different to me now. SIEGLINDA has not spent her days in loitering and dawdling in pleasant places. I go out now to make a journey. I must have an aim before me. I must feel all the way that I am eating up the miles, sweeping across the map, drawing nearer to my goal. I am a close student of contour books, gradients and surfaces. Every night I mark down the course of the day's march upon the map and add the day's performance to the tally of the miles. I do not mean to say that I travel rigidly according to a settled route, refusing to turn aside. But I am ruled none the less by the main line of advance. I must get forward with the campaign.

Now that I come to sum it up I find that I have changed my opinion on almost every point of practice. The caravan SIEGLINDA represents the new order of things. She was built for our wedding journey some years ago. We travelled about two hundred miles through Galloway, in a ceaseless downpour. It was then that my Partner and I learned to handle our craft, to work into each other's hands and to fit ourselves for the long

campaign of which I have to tell. It was not till May, 1912, that the way was clear before us for the dash to John o' Groat's.

I have never been able quite to lose my first sense of wonder in regard to caravanning and the way of life that makes it possible both to travel and to stay at home. It is enough to look over SIEGLINDA, lying now dismantled in her shed, and to think of *where she has been* in these last two summers, of her hundred camping-grounds, of the long trail of hill and dale that she has left behind. For the fulness and romance of caravanning lie in the fact that you do not simply go to see a place and come away. You bring your house and home and live there as a settled citizen. All the way you have made your journey into the unknown among familiar things. Every night you have the same house with a new garden, new views from the windows, a new aspect to the sun, new neighbours and surroundings. Yet your rooms and all about you are the same. You are literally at home in the strangest places.

Caravanning is sometimes attacked for its complexity and elaboration, compared with camping-out. But it is of a different order altogether. By all means if you are going to live in a tent—and I am myself a keen lover of canvas

—cut down your necessities and simplify to the last degree. But the special charm of a caravan is in complexity and completeness, the whole fun of it is to bring with you a dwelling fitted out in every detail, even to shoe-horns and paper-knives. For this little home and all that it contains is open to compete with other vehicles that merely carry goods or passengers. Think of where she has been and where she still may go. I may perform the offices of my daily life in any place where wheels will carry me. I may draw up and make my tea and drink it in the heart of Piccadilly or the Strand. In the thick of the densest traffic or far on the lonely moor, into any corner of these islands where there runs a reasonable road I may take my self-contained community, my private habitation, and no matter where I may be I shall be able to lay my hand upon the frying-pan, to take down the book which I left overnight in the rack above my head, to go into the bedroom and strop my razor or change my shoes.

I am often asked what I do when I am caravanning, if I fish or play golf or collect beetles, or what. But I have never looked upon a caravan as supplementing other pursuits. It is far too big and beautiful a thing in itself to act as an

auxiliary. I can only reply that no, I do none of these things. I am too busy caravanning.

It appeals to me on three different sides. There is the Campaigning side—the journey, the country and the road. There is the Domestic side—the internal economy and matters of the household. And there is the Human side, with its wide variety of encounters. For there is nothing when the tour is over and one's gains are added up that counts for half as much as the people one has met upon the way.

I propose to discuss the matter in my next three chapters from these three points of view.

CHAPTER II

THE CAMPAIGNING SIDE

THERE are some who find fault with caravanning —and I believe I was myself among them in days of long ago—because its scope is restricted to the road. With a knapsack and a portable tent or with a donkey and a sleeping-bag you may leave the beaten track for unfrequented by-paths and penetrate into far recesses of the country. With a caravan your choice is closely circumscribed.

But to argue in this manner is only to show that you have misunderstood. The attempt to avoid the road by travelling across country is entirely foreign to the caravanner's intention. For he belongs to the road. Even if it were possible for him to scamper up hillsides or wend his way down narrow glens the result would only be to leave a gap in his record at the point where he had deserted it. He is quite free on camping days to wander where he will, and he is not so closely bound to the caravan that he cannot break away for a mile or two to explore. But the

place of the caravan is always on the beaten track: it demands no preferential treatment: it falls into its stride among other travellers of every degree upon the common highway.

Of course it does. The road is everything to the caravanner. It is incomparably the most interesting, the most thrilling thing in the landscape: it is the key to the country, the one great common possession: it is history, and geography and a running commentary on the affairs of the district: it is the entrance and the exit and the stage.

If the caravanner cannot love the road for its own sake and cannot feel its power to lead him on he need not hope to make much of it. For the road is his element; he can never think of it as so much solid, stationary macadam. It is to him a living, fluid thing, rolling on into the unknown, ready to carry him round a hundred bends and corners, over a hundred hills, by bridges and cuttings and embankments, by level stretches and sweeping undulations, changing its whole nature repeatedly, daily confronting him with new problems, daily bringing him new rewards, till at last it shall deliver him up at the journey's end.

All his fortunes are bound up with it, and the

main questions with which he must concern himself are those of gradients and surfaces. For in a long campaign through difficult country it is imperative to look ahead, to know very clearly what you are in for, and the art of making out routes is largely in studying how best to take the bad hills the right way on and to avoid steep roads where the surface is soft or stony. With regard to gradients it may be taken as a general rule that anything above 1 in 20 is easily travelled: by the time we get down to 1 in 15 we must be prepared for heavy collar-work: 1 in 12 is dangerously steep. I have seldom climbed anything much worse than that.

At the very root of the matter, then, is this strong compulsion to follow the road, to get on with the task in hand—and the need of that new daily panorama that will unfold itself, discovering, as you go forward, what is beyond the forest, what is behind the hill, what new thing each bend of the road has kept in store for you.

In the old idle days I used to look for camping grounds in remote and hidden places. I was very fastidious about my nightly settlement, and it was not till I had decided upon it that I gave a thought to stabling. But that was literally to put the cart before the horse. With an arduous

march to carry through the prime consideration is to find good quarters for the horses. There is time enough to look for a "seat" for the van after. Thus I am generally to be found in camp not far from a farm. I may have lost something in my free choice of neighbourhood. I have gained much in freer intercourse with my neighbours. And I have learned the solid worth of stackyards.

There is one factor in estimating the conditions of the march that I prefer to leave out altogether, and that is the weather. For I am always on the side of the climate and know very well that almost all weather is good for caravanning, and that indeed we need all sorts and conditions of weather to complete the full tale of experience and adventure on the road. There are four months in the year in which I have never been out in a caravan, and I still hope to remedy that omission. But there is one day above all others that invites me forth—the First of May. Despite its many broken promises I still look to it as the day above all others to yoke up and drive away, and it was on the First of May that we set out for John o' Groat's. There is no good day for coming back. All that can be said is that some days are better than others. If you can keep out

till the weather breaks finally in the autumn and you drive home in wind and rain you may find it the easier to settle down. That was why I arranged the journey of last summer so that it ended in October. For I had been profoundly discontented on my return from John o' Groat's.

The grip that caravanning takes upon you as the days run on and you become more and more established in this way of life, is most easily estimated by the keenness of your reluctance to return. My Partner and I always try to look on the bright side of it. We make up and exchange charming visions of all the compensations that await us.

" Think of hot tubs," my Partner will say.

. . . " And electric light," I chime in. " And regular posts and newspapers."

. . . " And breakfast will be waiting when we get down in the morning."

. . . " And we won't ever have to wash up."

. . . " And we can use as much hot water as we like without having to carry it."

. . . " And we can play the pianola."

. . . " We can play tennis for that matter."

. . . " And after a while the sheen will come off my hands," I say. " People will no longer recognize me as a cook."

We do not of course persuade one another, but we do come to think after a time that there must be something to be got out of it.

All that comfortable line of argument is vanity. Perhaps some of these new sensations help for a short time to stave off the inevitable conclusion. But it isn't any good. We are discontented and ill at ease. For every morning when "yoking time" comes round it is brought home to us that there is no journey before us to-day, nor to-morrow, nor on any future day, that we must be content with the same old view from our windows, that this is our only camping ground.

And there are all manner of practical inconveniences. We have been living with all our daily necessities within reach: now they are scattered and dispersed. It seems that one must be always tramping along passages, moving from one room to another, climbing stairs. The furniture is clumsy and there is no way of getting rid of it. We can no longer shut down tables and chairs. Pianos and writing-desks and vast sofas cumber the ground. There are so many clocks to wind up on Monday morning: so many doors to lock at night—so much too much of everything.

And we can no longer control and manipulate our surroundings: they are out of hand. We

lose that comfortable sense of intimacy with all our minor chattels which had been worth so much to us. For my part I have a maddening desire to burst into the kitchen and see what is going on, to lend a hand with the boots or help to beat the carpets.

But the root cause of our discontent is of course that we are not moving on, that we have lost our daily panorama. We are suffering simply from " horizon hunger."

" The pauses are also music—often the best of the music," my singing master used to tell me. And the same may be said of the camping days on a long caravan tour. I am not at all sure that they are not the best of the music. If they are indulged in too frequently they will lose their savour, for they are only worth the having when they come with a record of solid achievement behind them. But after a full week on the road it is delightful to rise half an hour later than usual with no sense of urgency or dispatch, to sit on after breakfast for a while and smoke a pipe, while one calculates how many of the letters that have gathered up since last they were answered it will be possible to neglect.

Not that a camping day in SIEGLINDA has about it any flavour of idleness. The day's work

does indeed get slowly under way, but it rises in time to a fever of activity. It is Herbert's great opportunity, with mop and broom and chamois leather. (I shall introduce Herbert to you shortly: he is driver and handy man.) Inside and out the caravan must be purged of all the stains of travel and the dust of the road. The first rite is the washing of the floor, in preparation for which all movables must be ejected in chaos and put back later on in their due order. Then stoves, pots and pans, boots and shoes, curtain-rods, candlesticks and brasses must be made to shine. For my part I am round at the back, cleaning out the boxes and considering the state of the stores, re-arranging and repacking. It is not until the evening when Herbert has transferred his energies to the harness that peace descends upon the camp.

Much depends upon the country and the roads, but generally a hundred miles a week is good going. Allowing for the many delays which are bound to occur, in watering the horses, shopping, enquiring about camping-ground, perhaps mending harness or holding up a baker's cart, one does not reckon upon travelling more than three miles an hour: and six or seven hours on the road every day is rather more than enough. I do not generally travel more than five days a week,

stopping for Sunday and one other day, with a longer pause about once a month for overhauling.

At her very best SIEGLINDA travels at four miles an hour. That is on a sharply undulating road where she is taking the short rises at a trot. When I have to time her from point to point I am quite safe in estimating her pace at three and a half. And three and a half miles an hour is exactly the speed at which to travel if you would see all that is to be seen, talk to everyone who has anything to tell you and absorb and digest every stretch of the road, so as to make out bit by bit that perfect mental map of the whole country which shall be yours when the journey is complete.

CHAPTER III

THE DOMESTIC SIDE

I HAVE already spoken of the comfortable sense of intimacy with his minor chattels that belongs to the caravanner. It is the good workman's love for the feel of the tools that have been worn by long use to his hand. It is very good, at the opening of a tour, to be back again among the dear, familiar things, the small contrivances, the special instruments and utensils that have lain idle through the winter, and to meet again the old problems where you left them, as to whether the fruit-bag should be hung beside the window or beneath the candlesticks, as to which frying-pan should be reserved for omelettes, as to which hook must be kept for the wheel-key. I am then in the position of a collector who has been restored after a long absence to his possessions. I cannot point to an ivory drinking-cup which I picked up in India or a calabash pipe from Johannesburg or an Italian statuette, as some may do. But I have the small, squat, blue kettle that came out

of a village shop in Cheshire, the Sevenoaks tea-pot, the tumbler with the scratched inscription upon it, which, if everyone had his rights, belongs to a small public-house in Cumberland. I have what I believe to be the only really efficient pair of housemaid's gloves, which I found in an iron-monger's shop in Beauly ; and my best corkscrew hails from Aberdeen. Memories cluster about each tea-infuser and cruet-stand. My belongings have been lovingly accumulated in all parts of the land. And it is always good to be back among them.

There are all sorts of preliminary steps to be taken in these first few days. The cook is helpless till he has begun to build up his dripping-bowl : the rough-paper bag must lay in stock : soda-water must be made : a small glass jar must be inaugurated as an ash-tray, for when you have been at the game as long as I have you will not knock off cigarette ash into cups or saucers : there are oil-tanks to fill, new wicks to stretch, cloths and cleaners to apportion. All these introductory operations are full of promise, like laying of foundation stones.

Especially I should like to tell you of my house-maid's gloves. They are a remarkable pair, peculiar I should say to the Beauly neighbour-hood, for I have never seen their like elsewhere,

and there is of course enormous range in the quality of housemaid's gloves. I think if I were a millionaire I should always use chamois leather and order them in dozens of pairs. There is nothing to compare with them in comfort and appearance, and it is a delightful sensation to wash them, soapily. They also fit so close that you have the satisfaction of being nearer to your job in them than in the other sorts. But they are feeble to protect you in the lifting of hot plates, and they simply will not stand the wear that I put on them. I have tried many of the tougher sorts. Some remain clammy after washing: some are too clumsy: some grow hard and crack, and many shrink. My Beauly pair alone have none of these failings. They have already seen long service and are all the better for it. They are strong and tough and soft and generously large, of a fine buff colour, and their special merit is in the fact that—like Norwegian ski-boots—they are built with the seams outside.

I am myself the cook. Throughout the whole of my experience of caravanning I have held absolute sway in the kitchen. For years I maintained the right to throw out of the doorway any unauthorized pot or pan that appeared upon the hob, and that I now admit a certain measure

of co-operation is due to the decided talents that my Partner has displayed in the matter of the Sweets—a department that I had perhaps neglected.

I shall never be a good plain cook. I sometimes wonder if, even in these days of rising wages, I should be worth twenty pounds a year to anyone. For there are great gaps in my experience. My fixed determination to have nothing to do with cookery books and to spurn the advice of the excellent Mrs. Beeton has restricted my knowledge of the common fare of every-day life. But it may, I think, with truth be said that with all my shortcomings there is about my cooking something of that dash and originality which characterizes the amateur in every branch of sport. I pride myself on making much of humble things, for it is when the forager has failed and supplies are low that the caravan cook must rise to his best efforts. I should think little of him if he could not make fish-cakes without fish. Above all, I like to deal with the potato and the egg. They are both a constant stand-by, but widely different in character—one of a grand consistency, apt to be carved or chipped or shredded, mashed or moulded : the other with a wide range of body and fluidity, from the merest froth to an

almost leathery slab. One is dour and slow to cook, the other active and responsive. While the potato must be goaded and pushed forward, the egg must be retarded and held back.

Perhaps the hour or two before supper, on a night when I have a big campaign on hand, is the time that I recall most gratefully in the cycle of the caravanner's day. The period of preparation, cutting up, mixing, peeling, buttering, blending is well over and everything is under way, each member with its proper handicap, so that all will reach the post together. Delicious hidden processes are going forward in the oven, simmering pots crowd the top of the stove. Only the pancakes remain for a final spurt on the Primus stove when the table is already set. There is plenty of quiet occupation in stirring, flavouring, peering into the oven, lifting a lid now and then, moving a pot from one station to another. The front of the van is open and I have ample time to contemplate the traffic of the stackyard in the twilight, to watch Herbert putting up his tent, or exchange a few words with a passing ploughman. And before the final rite of dishing up I spend hilarious minutes, with gloved hands and frying-pan, tossing pancakes, slithering them to and fro, rolling and punching and building them

into a pyramid. And if, as is most likely, I have an experiment in the oven, there will be plenty of excitement when we come to dishing up.

Caravanning contains no more delightful feature than its power of elevating and ennobling sordid domestic jobs. I have often told myself that it cannot really be any fun to peel potatoes, or it would have been discovered long ago. And yet as I sit on the door-mat by the side of the stream with a pointed knife and a bucket I am quite unconscious of any lack of interest in my work. On the contrary, as long as potatoes continue to show the magnificent variety in substance and contour that I have always found in them, this is an engrossing pursuit. The filling of oil-tanks and trimming of wicks, a duty that falls to my lot early in the day, might possibly repel the unaccustomed. But I rather like to feel the wick scrunch as I rub it down, and it calls for a good eye and some sense of balance to succeed and get a clear white flame, quite free from peaks and undulations.

The important matter of shopping also ceases to be a necessary evil and becomes a delightful exploit. I like nothing better than to come to town, draw up at the post office and, dividing the list among the members of the crew, assume my

market basket. The ironmonger is always a happy hunting-ground for fresh discovery, but generally my most important item is the visit to the butcher. I am not now very easily taken in on the question of meat. You will not find me carrying away a sirloin that does not stand up or steak that is cut too thin. With the grocer I look forward to some pleasant discussion while he is slicing the bacon, and there are sundry old women in dairies who are worth a visit. When I have looked round and exclaimed with enthusiasm what a delightful shop this is, I generally find we are on terms and she must see the interior of SIEGLINDA before I drive away.

By degrees I have lost all shame about shopping. It is nothing to me now to pull up in the high street of a popular resort and open my back larder for all the world to see, while I kneel down and fill my egg-box : or to set off across the road with an oil-can in one hand and a case of empty bottles in the other. A caravan has a way of explaining these things, even as it explains one's costume and appearance. It is a safe passport to the goodwill of the neighbourhood.

But despite my love for my utensils there are times when they exasperate me beyond measure. For with all my ingenuity and with all my years

of practice I cannot keep them still. There is no more baffling problem in a caravan than the prevention of the twin visitations of jibbing and chittering. The wind cannot be entirely to blame: I often feel that it is no more than a pretext. For the thing is brought about by some sort of evil conspiracy among my goods and chattels. Otherwise how is it that an oil-can on a hook will remain silent for half the tour and then suddenly lift up its voice in the dead of night in response to the gentle knocking of the frying-pan against the kitchen wall?

Of all the adversities that we have to face this is the only one that reduces me to despair. For things only jib and chitter in the night, and they never start till the light is out. I am thinking of a night at Melvich, on the way to John o' Groat's, when we were in an exposed position and the wind was high. I waited and listened long before putting out the candle and I found about me the silence of the tomb. But a quarter of an hour later, just when I was on the verge of sleep, the fun began. I heard a subdued and rhythmic creaking just below my head. That was the roller swinging. Had I been new to the game I suppose I should have got up at once and silenced it, but I knew better. I faced the fact that I was

in for one of those periods of hectic and varied activity, known in a caravan as a night's rest. And so I waited for a bit that I might kill two birds or more with one stone. Soon I heard the plaintive moan of a restless bucket, and after that one of the cups on its hook in the corner cupboard began to tap very gently and at irregular intervals. Then I got up and fixed these three.

The next effort was a sort of scraping, scoring noise, a rubbing, a grinding, a swaying back and forth. This I could not place at all. I did not even know if it was inside the van or out, and every time I got up to look for it, it heard me coming and stopped. My Partner made some helpful suggestions—as that it was something on the roof which might be reached with the ladder if it was near the edge : but it was a long time before I ran it to earth. It was the whip swinging against the side of the van where some idiot had hung it. I flung it as far as I could across the moor and got back to bed. Then the door began to chatter and had to be wedged. . . .

As the night wore on I grew more and more determined. When I fixed a thing I did not have to fix it twice. I was soon crawling about with a hammer and nails, a few wedges and a ball of string. There are all sorts of ways of jamming

things. . . . Perhaps the things that simply flap are the worst. I caught my razor-strop at that game. I do not think that it will do it again, but it is true that it was not improved—as a strop—by the four-inch screw that I put through it. And at last I succeeded, long after dawn, and went to bed with a fine sense of stringency and tautness all about me. But when Herbert greeted me in the morning and wanted to know if I had had a good night I told him that I was thinking of a plan of having a little chamber made in the garden at home, hewn out of the living rock, with a lid—a place where I could crawl in and spend the first night after my return.

CHAPTER IV

THE HUMAN SIDE

And of course the road is the place to meet people, and caravanning stands almost alone in its faculty for fortunate encounters. Those who are of a morose or solitary habit would do well to try some other way of life, for the caravanner falls in with all sorts and conditions of men and he has everything in his favour to put him on good terms with them. He does not, as some may do, fling his dust in their faces and rush on, nor does he pride himself on avoiding other wayfarers by "keeping off the beaten track." And if he travels with an open mind, full of curiosity and ready for adventure, he will let slip no opportunity for making new acquaintances.

I can look back upon a vast and various company of them, made up of caravanners like myself, of tinkers, stone-breakers, road surveyors, policemen, farmers, schoolmasters, ministers, shopkeepers of every degree, artists, sportsmen, gamekeepers, school children, tramps, magnificent

people in motor-cars, grubby people in donkey-carts, railway porters and hotel proprietors, and there are very few of them who have not done something to help me on my way. It is a most happy relation, this of the caravanner to the people of the country where he travels. It creates an atmosphere of hospitality. For the caravanner is immensely dependent upon the inhabitants. He is looking for favours, not demanding rights. Every camping-ground is a concession. He is the guest of a whole neighbourhood. And I do not know how it is but there is that about him that touches the hearts especially of kindly and comfortable old ladies. They seem to feel that there is something forlorn in his position, travelling as he does without a proper roof over his head. And they want to minister to him.

This hospitable spirit works both ways. For a caravan itself is the most approachable of dwellings. It has no high hedges or trellises or frowning gateways to keep out the passer-by, and everyone, without exception, is curious to see what it is like inside. So that we have many callers. One of the queerest of them all dropped in one evening when I was camped in the corner of a stackyard at Bonar Bridge. My Partner

was lying down for half an hour before supper, and I was at work at the stove when I was suddenly aware of someone sitting on the step and peering into the van, with his head just on a level with my feet.

" Are yer fond o' toorin' ? " he asked, without any further introduction. I told him that I was : and he sighed. He had had a caravan himself at one time, he explained, and had lived in it for two years. But he had tired of it. He was a shabby little, dried-up, disconsolate-looking man, an Englishman. I asked him about himself, and he told me that he was an itinerant photographer and was walking through the villages, taking " growps." His heart seemed to be full of pity for me.

" It's all very fine and large fer a time—fer a week or two. But you'll tire of it, same as I did."

" Oh, I don't think so," said I.

" Yes yer will. Stands to reason. Ye'll tire of it in time. Ye'll feel a—a—a sort of a tameness."

He shifted his position and rested his elbow on the floor. " I *'ed* to give it up, yer see, so I know."

" But why did you give it up ? " I asked. " Didn't it pay ? "

" Paid like smoke. But it worn't any good." There was a pause, and then he added, confidentially, in an undertone, " Couldn't stand the monopoly."

" Oh, that was it ? "

" Yes : week after week. Yer wouldn't believe 'ow monopolous it were. I've often tried ter think of a way out."

I assured him that I had never suffered in that respect, that, on the contrary, I found it very entertaining. But he still regarded me with an eye of deep compassion. He clearly wanted to help me if he could. At last it came to him.

" I'll tell yer wot I sh'd do," he said, " if I wos you. If I wos you I sh'd either (it'd be quite simple, yer know)—I sh'd *either* run a little bit of a circus *or* 'old religious meetin's. It don't matter w'ich. That's wot I sh'd do."

I had to turn away to put the hot plates on the top of the copper, and when I looked round again he had gone, which was a pity, as I should have liked to have had some further conversation with him, and I think my Partner would have been pleased to meet him.

It is not in the nature of things that all our encounters should be entirely friendly, but the only time that I found myself seriously at

variance with my neighbours was on the great occasion of Sam's night out. I shall have much to tell you of the horses, and you will learn that this incident was quite in keeping with Sam's character, while Simon's behaviour was exemplary throughout. We were camped at a little village in Inverness-shire, and the horses were put up in the hotel stable along with a small, lean, white pony belonging to the Postman. There was of course no eye-witness of the dark doings of that night, but as far as we could judge from the evidence that remained in the morning, this was what happened. First Sam broke loose: then he went over and liberated Simon—who, however, took no part in the affair. After that, with some ingenuity, he opened the door that led to an adjoining shed. There he disposed of the greater part of a bag of oats and topped off with a square meal of potatoes (which were not at all good for him). Then he turned his attention to the Postman's pony, in a spirit, I am convinced, of pure playfulness; but Sam is a good deal more heavy-handed than he knows. The pony was marked somewhat conspicuously on the scruff of the neck, which rather looked as if Sam had picked him up and shaken him, as a dog might shake a rat. Thereafter Sam got both

feet jammed in the rack, so that he was quite unable to move, and waited patiently for the dawn.

Early the following day—which we spent in camp—the Postman appeared, demanding heavy damages. I did not like to commit myself to a definite figure, but suggested that as a basis of calculation we should try to arrive at the value of the pony—when enjoying normal health. There we disagreed, for he put it at Ten Pounds while I put it at Three. He admitted that in a week or less the pony would be ready for the road. But meantime he must run the mails. He must hire from the Hotel Proprietor. That would cost him Fifty Shillings.

It is needless to follow all the negotiations. The village was soon split into two camps. The Hotel Proprietor sided with the Postman, but the Blacksmith, with a small following, came over to us. And the matter was by no means simplified by the arrival of the Postman's Father, who put in a plea (which appeared to be groundless) that the pony belonged to him.

The great scene occurred when the horses were brought out of the stable the following morning. The whole village was there, and the yard was in a ferment. Herbert, whose part had been

rehearsed overnight, handed the Postman the sum of One Pound. It was not a question of any damages or compensation, he pointed out. But the poor man had had his pony hurt, and this was a little present for him.

"I think," put in the Blacksmith ponderously, "that Mr. Smith is one in a thousand to pay anything at all."

Then followed a torrent of argument from the Hotel Proprietor (who had already been paid for his oats and potatoes) with many threats of an action at law. It was the Blacksmith's opinion, however, that if it was a question of law there was a good case against a landlord who provided rotten halters in his stables, so that horses got loose and poisoned themselves with potatoes. To this startling declaration he added impressively, "To my mind he's one in a thousand—in a *thousand*—to pay anything at all."

At that point the Postman dropped out. He was but a weakling at the best, and he went off to the stables, pretty well content with the spoils. But this was not the end of it, so the Hotel Proprietor assured us. This was by no means the end of it. It was only the beginning. He was boldly confronted by the

Blacksmith—for the principals on both sides had now retired from the arena. The crowd was veering round, and there were even some who suggested that the Postman had gone to harness the pony. At last Herbert advanced with a horse in either hand, and the crowd made way for him to pass. At that dramatic moment the Blacksmith broke the tense silence, as if summing up.

"The plain truth is," he said, "he's one in a thousand."

And so we drove away, and I need not dwell upon our encounter with the Postman's Mother, who met us on the road, protesting that the pony in reality was her private property.

Even in the most pleasant wayside conversations on a caravan tour one cannot, I suppose, always expect to meet with original views, and there is a certain bogy of reiteration which pursues me. If I relate to you what happened when I went shopping in Aberfeldy you are to understand that this is only a fair sample of what always happens equally elsewhere, except that this was the only time that I rebelled.

I had started with the butcher, who had been keeping his eye upon the expedition through his window ever since it arrived.

" It must be a nice way to see the country," he remarked cheerfully.

" Oh, yes," I agreed. " It's an ideal holiday. I want a square little sirloin about six pounds."

" I dare say you like that better than motoring," he went on, " because——"

" Because," said I (for I know the answer to that one by heart), " you are not in too great a hurry and have plenty of time to look about you. Very well, six and a half, if you like. Better put in some suet."

I had to go to the baker next.

" It must be an ideal holiday," said the young woman, as soon as she had established my connection with the caravan.

" Oh, yes, yes," said I. " That is so. By all means."

" And such a nice way to see the country."

" Quite," said I. " I want a half-loaf, and I must have one that doesn't bulge or it won't fit my tin." I got off with that, but I passed a florid old gentleman with a stick, as soon as I got out of the shop, who was maintaining, in conversation with Herbert, that in his opinion it was a long way better than a motor, as—if you came to think of it—you were able, not being in too great a hurry, to look about you and see

the country. I hastened on, with averted head.

When the grocer concluded that it was an *ideal* way to see the country I felt that he was mixing things up rather. However, I put in the little bit about the motor and not being in a hurry. And I thought that that had finished him. I was disappointed when he reverted, jumped back and began again in the middle of the bar.

"I think it must be a perfect holiday," he said, as he handed me the parcel—"er—er—ideal."

"Quite," said I mournfully. He was a pleasant fellow, this grocer. I felt that, now that we had exhausted the preliminaries, it was a pity not to have more conversation with him. But I had to move on to the chemist and begin all over again. They had nearly worn me out among them, and I felt at first that I could hardly face it. But I pulled myself together and went in.

"Do you see that caravan out there?" I asked sternly. "Yes? Are you sure? Well, it belongs to me. I travel in it. I want to make it clear to you that it is an ideal holiday." He tried to break in, but I talked him down. "I think you will agree with me that it is a nice way to see the country. I prefer it to motoring, and do you

know why? Because I am not in too great a hurry, and thus have plenty of time to look about me. And now"—I took a long breath—"I wish you would let me inspect your stock of tooth-brushes."

CHAPTER V

THE CARAVAN "SIEGLINDA"

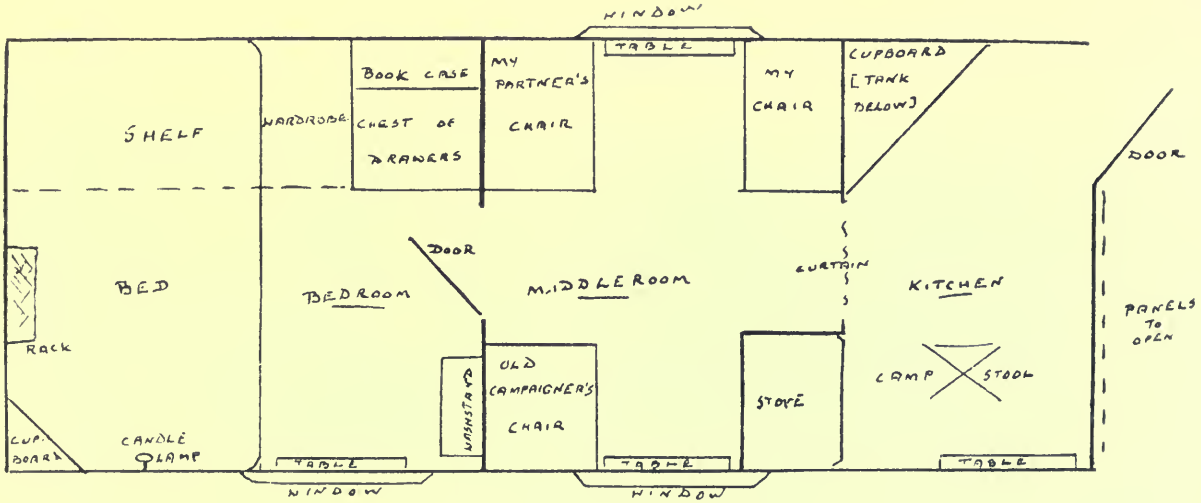
AND now I shall have to describe the Caravan SIEGLINDA. It is not without a certain emotion that I present her to you, for you will understand that she is worth something more to me than the sum of her component parts, after all we have been through together. She is simply my idea of the Perfect Caravan, and I do not believe that there is any point in which I can improve upon her. I have only arrived at her by a long and comprehensive process. She is the last of a series of caravans, each of which has been tested, altered, adapted and superseded in its turn, and she has now gone through the final and most necessary stage of long experience. For I have lived and toured in her for many months, travelling by all sorts and conditions of roads, camping in all manner of places, encountering all varieties of weather—and making small improvements and modifications all the way.

Perhaps I have done my work too well. When

next I take the road I am afraid that a coat of varnish is all that will be called for, and I shall miss something in those pleasant feverish weeks of "fitting out," which used to be so full of searching tests and fresh inventions.

She is nearly eighteen feet long, six feet six broad, three feet six high, to the floor, and ten feet to the roof. She is built of three-ply oak panelling, three-sixteenths of an inch thick, with a frame of oak, and a roof of red Oregon Pine, covered with white canvas. She has one screw brake, worked from the front, and since my journey to John o' Groat's I have fitted another behind (operating on the back of the back wheels, so that they are gripped on either side) for use in emergency. This has taken the place of the slipper. The under-carriage projects about two feet in front of the body of the van, forming a little platform. She has a full lock, sound axles and springs and strong carriage wheels, about three feet in diameter, with steel tyres of two and a half inches breadth. The wheels are set well below the body.

We shall now have to have a ground plan of the interior. I have shown it with the tables folded down and the chairs up, so that we may have room to move about, and I should explain that it



INTERIOR PLANNING OF "SIEGLINDA"

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contains no mysteries or complications. With the exception of the tables and chairs and the washstand, there is nothing that folds or tilts, or collapses or disappears. I cannot of course get everything into my plan, without confusion, but I have shown the general arrangement.

The Kitchen is a small compartment, entirely open, in fine weather, to the front. There is a recess in the partition wall, which holds the Rippingille stove, with its six-inch wicks at either end and large oven in the middle. On the top of this rests a square copper box, holding five gallons of water, which can be heated to the boiling point in about a couple of hours. That is an excellent innovation, as the demand for boiling water used to keep my hobs closely crowded with kettles all the evening. Below the stove is a drawer full of treasured cooking utensils, an egg-whisk, grater, apple-corer, a large pair of scissors and many more. Here also is a dripping-bowl and sundry flavourings. Up one side of the stove run a series of little leather pouches (made out of the fingers of an old pair of gloves) which hold my private knife, fork and spoon, and salt and pepper dusters. Above the stove the recess is filled with rods and hooks for drying clothes and shoes. There is a folding

table at my left hand and over to the right, if I stretch a long arm, I can reach the cold-water tank (which also holds five gallons) and charge my beaker at the tap. In this way all the hauling about of cans and buckets inside the van, which is apt to make life a burden, has been eliminated. Above the cold tank is a corner cupboard full of crockery, and below it the housemaid's pantry, screened by a curtain. Finally, far above my head, as I sit on my camp-stool at the stove, are one or two hooks for my housemaid's gloves, kitchen towels and the members of the underworld (of whom I shall have more to tell). The Primus stove is set on the floor when in action. It is chiefly called upon for quick frying. And slung on the wall by leather straps is my seasoned brace of wooden spoons—known to me as Sweet and Savoury.

I believe that all high authorities on caravanning have condemned the Rippingille stove, and every other oil stove with wicks, as obsolete. Some uphold the "duck" oven and cookers of that type: others are in favour of coal. For my part I have tried them all and returned with gratitude to the Rippingille. The coal stove which used to occupy the kitchen of SIEGLINDA was not abandoned without a pang. I doubt if

she has ever looked so well as she used to do on a stormy night, with the smoke whisking away before the wind, from her little white-bonneted chimney. And in bad weather there was much comfort in the glowing coals, not to speak of the toast they made, that was not to be lightly forgotten. But that tiny kitchen range had too many drawbacks, and it was given up after the John o' Groat's journey. It necessitated not only carrying a chimney, but a ladder to take the chimney off and on. It was heavy in itself, and called for heavy, dirty fuel: and it was not easy in remote places to get coal. Further, the oven could not be kept up without insistent attention, and a hot oven is the backbone of successful cookery. With my old ally, the Rippingille, the oven is hot in ten minutes, and maintains an even heat thereafter. And it is very hot, for it soon runs my oven thermometer to its limit of 400 degrees. The Rippingille also can be perfectly regulated, turned down and safely left. By leaving one lamp very low at night I can count on a supply of hot water, in my copper box, in the morning. And that is a good long step into the routine of a new day.

The Primus stove, the faithful servant of all who must get their own meals in a hurry, is a

valuable second string. But I should like to express my hearty contempt for all efforts at serious cooking with spirit lamps. I would about as soon try to carve with a penknife or dig potatoes with a spoon.

Let us now look into the Middleroom. Its walls are of dark green painted canvas, and the woodwork is white. It is almost square, but one of the corners, as you will see, is missing, owing to the bite taken out by the kitchen recess. There are three folding chairs and tables on either side. The windows on both sides slide up and down. But the strong point of the middleroom is the complete and ingenious occupation of its wall-space. It would not be easy to lay your hand upon any part of the wall that is not rendering special service. Above my Partner's head is a small corner cupboard (salt, pepper, tea, coffee, etc.), and below that an ink-bottle and pen, slung in leather loops. Near the roof, in the Old Campaigner's corner, is a light railway rack, corresponding to a similar one above my own head. On the side walls are a bag for fruit, a hook for candlesticks, a satchel for unanswered letters. The wall at the back of the recess carries a knife-and-fork box lined with green baize, carvers, corkscrews, tin-openers in leather

loops, and at the floor a canvas rough-paper bag. Above there are many leather loops, for map, diary, contour-book, letters for post, newspapers. Finally, in each corner hangs a pot for flowers on a hook, an institution which greatly "sets off" the room without adding to the number of loose properties. For the small, exasperating traffic in minor chattels, with no fixed place of abode, must always be cut down. Everything you are likely to need in the course of the day should be at hand, and even visible, but it should be well out of your way and firmly fixed. That is why we have so far developed the wall-works of the middleroom.

I am afraid that there is not much more to be done to this room. The Head Mechanic sits and ponders on it sometimes in the quiet of the evening, trying to devise improvements; but there is little scope for him left.

The Bedroom is about eight feet by six and a half, and I do not think that more solid comfort with so little confusion could be packed into the space. For I count the bedroom to be the cream of SIEGLINDA. A double bed, four feet in breadth, made of wooden slats like those often used on board ship, occupies the far end. A broad shelf, capable of being used as a bed, crosses the foot

of it, some twenty inches higher. This carries all the extra bedding belonging to the tents. Between the end of this shelf and the partition is a tall, narrow chest of drawers, above that a bookcase, while below the shelf (between the chest of drawers and the bed) is a wardrobe, covered by a curtain.

The only window is on the opposite side. It has a sliding shutter that obscures the lower half of it. In the large angle of wall-space above the bed there are many things—a corner cupboard, a railway rack, a swinging candle-lamp, a couple of long bags of strong linen, divided into compartments, which carry all the boots and shoes. These are generally out of place on the floor, and have a horrid faculty for getting kicked away into inaccessible corners and beneath low-lying obstacles.

Below the window is a table, and beside that a folding wash-stand, whose disused water-tank has been divided up to carry bottles. Under the bed is a linen-chest in the form of a huge drawer, which contains an immense amount of stuff. There is space behind that where all such things are stowed as are not likely to be wanted in every-day life. There is also room at the end of the chest for camp beds.

On the roof above the shelf is a hat-rack of cords.

The clock is strapped to the wall above the wash-stand.

There is a tight little corner beside the window for fishing-rods and The Umbrella.

Pipes go on the top of the bookcase; the rolling-pin and board on the top of the linen-chest; the writing-board on the wall above the shelf; and all wandering odds and ends are flung into the railway rack. There are elegant curtains.

At night a perpetual draught is secured by chaining back the door and opening the windows of the middleroom as well as that of the bedroom. But that programme may be modified by the direction of the rain.

A carpet cannot possibly be kept going in a caravan, where all the muddy traffic is confined to a few square feet. The floor of SIEGLINDA is covered with cork matting, and she carries a charming little woolly rug, which makes its sole appearance at dinner parties.

CHAPTER VI

CREW AND EQUIPMENT

My Partner and I divide the duties of our household so that there is no overlapping and we never get into each other's way. I am Cook, Scullion and Head Mechanic : she is Chambermaid, Seamstress and Official Photographer. I am on my own ground in the kitchen, while she rules with a rod of iron in the bedroom. In the middleroom we may be said to meet on equal terms. I am not quite able to explain why the making of mustard rests with her, while the charging of the soda-water syphon is in my hands, but such fine distinctions are well understood between us, and we are perhaps both a little jealous of our own special jobs and resent encroachments.

When we have visitors with us they sleep in a tent, and we can manage pretty comfortably to accommodate four at table in the middleroom, my Partner sitting on a camp-stool. In an emergency the middleroom can be converted into a bedroom for two.

We carry two tents, one for Herbert and one for visitors. These are Alpine tents of a floor space of about seven feet square, and are built with the floor-cloth sewn on and the poles sewn into the corners, so that they can be instantly rolled up, all in a piece, and slung in the crutch. The crutch is a barred structure, like a gate, at the back of the van, hinged at the bottom and swung out as far as is necessary on chains. It carries a sack of oats besides the tents, horse-cloths, nose-bags and so on.

Under the van at the back is a larder and box for pots and pans, and the whole of the rest of the space beneath the floor is taken up by a net, which holds camp furniture and odds and ends. We take three camp beds, two small tables, some chairs and camp-stools. Buckets and oil-cans hang on hooks, along with a bag for vegetables.

On my last journey I took also a new and special invention in the form of a camp-stable, to be used when we wanted to stop in lonely places where there was neither stabling nor grass for the horses. It is a sturdy little structure, about seven feet high, in shape like the letter H, and supported by pegged ropes. The horses are tied to the cross-bar face to face, cloths are put on them, boxes of oats slung to the bar and a net

full of hay suspended overhead. As it turned out this stable was never used, as we always found good accommodation, so that its efficiency has not yet been tested. It remains an open question whether Sam would have contrived to wreck it in the watches of the night or not.

We also carry a spade, a scythe, a bag of tools, rope, a few spare straps, polish for harness, brass, boots and stove ; dubbin, nails, and extra brake leathers.

I shall have so much to say of the horses in the course of my story that here no more is necessary than a bare introduction. Sam has been on the farm for several years, though he was new to the caravan. He stands a full seventeen hands high and is of a rich dark grey, with a most appealing countenance. He is a horse of great power and of a most lively disposition. There is nothing he fears so much as being bored. Simon, who was only bought a week before we started, as a match for Sam, is of a lighter grey and a more slender build. He is a willing, dogged soul with a constitutional objection to rain in his face, which fusses and irritates him beyond measure. We have more than once discussed the question of fitting him out with an umbrella.

Herbert looks after the horses, brings water and

supplies, and the rest of his time is given over for the most part to polishing, rubbing, shining, furbishing—to keeping the caravan itself, the harness, boots and shoes, candlesticks, lamps, knives, forks and spoons and half a hundred other things bright and clean.

CHAPTER VII

THE TROUBLES OF THE CARAVANNER

And now before we start together upon our dash to John o' Groat's—and thereafter we shall discuss my other journeys of the last two summers—it occurs to me that there may be something more to be said upon the general question. It is possible that the reader may look to me for advice upon some points which do not happen to be dealt with in the narrative, especially if he is quite without experience of caravanning. And I have so often met with beginners who have got into trouble on their first tour that I may be able to help him with a few suggestions.

The first and most difficult question is—How and Where to hire a Caravan. It is almost essential to obtain one in the neighbourhood where the tour is to take place, as it is awkward and expensive to send them about the country by rail. And the supply so far is very inadequate. I have given you my idea of what a caravan should be, and I can only advise you to apply to the

Secretary of the Caravan Club (83 Avenue Chambers, 42 Bloomsbury Square, W.C.), who has a list of caravans for hire in various parts of the country, and there to try to find what you want.

As to horses, the most likely field is to be found in the small country towns. A horse that comes from the city is rather out of his element on country roads and consuming country fare. Every town of two thousand inhabitants or more has a carting contractor among its tradesmen, with horses accustomed to just the sort of journeys that you are to make. Prices vary greatly in different parts of the country, but I have always held about 22s. 6d. a week a fair charge for horse and harness (of a strong dogcart type) if both are equal to the work. As a general rule your horse should be stabled at night, but there is no reason why he should not lie out in good weather, provided he gets plenty to eat. But if grass is to be substituted for hay in this manner it should be plentiful and good. It is not enough to turn your horse into a bare pasture field, full of weeds, after his day's journey. If he is stabled he should have as much long hay as he can eat, and in either case two feeds a day—morning and evening—say about a stone to a stone and a half of oats in all.

If you stop when your horse is overheated you

will not omit to throw a cloth of some sort over him, and it is better to water him just before starting again than to allow him to stand a while after drinking.

I find on an average, in continuous travelling, that horses need to be shod about once a month, and wheels and lock should be oiled at about the same interval.

Never tie the horse to the van at night, or you will get no sleep. Never tie the reins to the body of the van when the horse is in. If you have to tie them, tie them to the undercarriage in front. Otherwise, if the horse turns, as the lock swings round the reins may tighten suddenly and nearly strangle him.

In selecting camping-ground, gates are a first consideration. Remember that your principal interest is not what the front of the van is doing, but what is going to happen at the far end of it. The breadth of the road out of which you are turning is quite as important as the breadth of the gate itself. Many novices in the art get the caravan horribly scarred and mauled by charging incautiously through gates, without any nice calculation. It is only necessary to go slow, and, if you see trouble before you, to back out and start again. In camping avoid soft ground and,

if you find your wheels are going to sink, look out for four short boards or planks (which are generally to be picked up not far away) and draw on to them. Otherwise you are in for trouble in the morning. Be careful to camp with your back to the wind. If you have rain driving into the van at the front it complicates matters.

Give lamp-posts a wide berth. To show the necessity of that injunction I may say that I know of four several lamp-posts that were knocked down by caravans—one of them by myself. It is very easily done, as if the wheel is close up to the kerb the top of the van projects some inches over it.

Avoid a field with cattle in it. They are vexatious neighbours.

I have never myself got into trouble through camping by the road-side, but it is well to avoid it, except of course on the open moor. There are local by-laws regulating the number of feet of clearance on each side of the road which must not be encroached upon. And if you are ever forced to remain overnight too near the road for absolute safety, do not fail to leave out a lamp. There are also by-laws in some counties, enjoining a rear light, if the vehicle is more than eighteen feet in length.

Finally you may want to know if you are to take a bicycle. It is sometimes useful for foraging: and it is a terrible nuisance at other times. I shall never take one again. There seems to be no room for it in the scheme of things. I carried one to the far corner of Sutherland, on the way to John o' Groat's, by which time it was in no fit condition to use, though I had never had it down off the crutch. And there I gratefully sent it home. It is easy, in an emergency, to borrow a bicycle at almost any cottage.

CHAPTER VIII

TO JOHN O' GROAT'S: I

We did not set out for John o' Groat's with the single aim of reaching our goal by the easiest route. We travelled, as will be seen by the map, in a series of great zigzags up the heart of Scotland, exploring the country far and wide as we went. For we had gaily concluded, when first the project was discussed, that we would go up by the West and come back by the East: and our erratic course was due to our determined and pathetic endeavours to reach the West Coast. This West Coast, North of Glasgow, proved altogether too tough a problem for us. I hope it may be possible to do it some day with a pony-cart and a tent, but it is almost beyond the scope of a caravan. At every point as we approached it dangers and difficulties increased about us. Not only are the roads generally bad, with many barbarous gradients, but the whole of that side of Scotland is so torn into rags and tatters by arms of the sea that the traveller is often confronted

by ferries, most of which are incapable of carrying a caravan of the size of SIEGLINDA. Thus we were continually boring into the West, only to be pulled sharply back again. We stuck to it to the last, and it was in the extreme North-West corner of Scotland that we made our final attempt. But it was not till the following summer that we succeeded.

The great moment of our departure lost something of its effect through gloomy weather that did not make for enthusiasm. But it was with a heavy cargo of good wishes that we turned up the lane among the dripping beech trees, picked up a milk bottle and a last coil of rope at the corner, and drove away to the North. We had a thousand feet to climb before lunch, and all the way up the Old Edinburgh Road from Moffat we rolled along in the centre of a small moving circle of streaming track and glistening sodden moor, shut in by mist and rain.

That was a long, slow, steady pull, but when we stopped to water the horses at the summit we felt that we had made a bold start upon our enterprise. Already we had reached a higher altitude, with one single exception, than any that we were to attain on our whole journey. Already we had crossed our first watershed from the

Southern to the Eastern slope of Scotland. I like to divide the whole of Scotland into the four slopes to East, West, North and South, according to the flow of the rivers, when I speak of our route to John o' Groat's. Seven times were we to cross main watersheds from one slope to another before we reached our goal, and these crossings were the chief landmarks of our journey. For this was a real campaigning march, such as I have never undertaken before or since. Our chief preoccupation was in gradients and altitudes, and it is in such terms that I remember it. The other journeys that I have to describe were of a different order. I look back upon them rather as on a great map of the country that has come to life ; I am not much concerned with the rise and fall of the land. But on the road to John o' Groat's I always think of SIEGLINDA as toiling up or down.

We camped the first night at Tweedsmuir, and then left the Edinburgh Road and travelled through Biggar to Thankerton. For the caravanner's first problem in making for the North of Scotland is to cross the bad belt of country lying between the Forth and Clyde, which is rich in mines and factories and other useful things that are by no means in his line. There are three ways

to cross this belt. You may ferry the Forth at Queensferry or the Clyde at Erskine, or you may take the Great North Road between the two. On this occasion we crossed by Erskine Ferry.

On the following night we camped on the very edge of the mining district, near Larkhall, and after that we had our first encounter with electric cars. We have no very pleasant recollections of the two days that followed—through Hamilton and Paisley—for we travelled most of the way under riotous and exasperating circumstances and at an abnormal speed, with Simon in a state of terror and revolt at the whistling of the overhead wires. All things considered we were fortunate to come through that ordeal without a scratch on the van. Cars still pursued us on the North side of the river, and it was not till we reached Loch Lomond that our anxieties were at an end.

We had wonderful days upon Loch Lomond, of sun and shower and flying cloud, and the season was that of the grand crescendo of the foliage when every day brings forth fresh harmonies of green. Near Tarbet we came upon one of the greatest camps of our journey. There was a long, broad-backed rock, tufted with herbage

on the top and running out into the loch. It was just of a size to accommodate the van, with ample margins on every side, and it was partly screened from the road by trees. Gingerly we backed her on to it till she rested on a level keel, and there she remained with water all about her, while the fine outline of Ben Lomond filled the bedroom window.

We were only two miles from the county of Argyll that night, but that is another story and does not concern us now.

We spent the Sunday at Ardlui, at the Highland end of Loch Lomond. The other end of the loch is of a gentle Lowland type of beauty: one feels that it would not be out of place among the English Lakes. But its character changes suddenly toward the Northern end: the hill-sides spring more abruptly from its banks: the road is squeezed close between rock and water, and at the top there is a strong impression of widening distances and expanding space. Birch woods appear, flung far up the mountain-sides, and rolling tracts of moor.

At Crianlarich we were forced to turn to the East, the road by Oban and Fort William being held up, as far as we were concerned, by the ferry at Ballachulish. And thus our course lay along

a naked hillside to Killin, where we spent Monday night, and thereafter, by the fine forest road that follows the whole length of Loch Tay, through Kenmore to Aberfeldy. These were days of joyous travel in perfect weather and with no great difficulties to meet. But when, at Ballinluig, we turned again to the North-West and, after passing through Pitlochry (where we spent a night) and Blair Atholl, advanced up the Grampian Pass to Dalnaspidal, we had pretty heavy going all the way. This is the one main road up the heart of Scotland to the North. It makes its way through the only gap in the great barrier of the Grampians, and it is a long and stiff ascent, with an indifferent surface, rising, through bleak country, with sharp little undulations for thirteen miles to the summit. And we were impeded by a strong head wind, which added much to the weight of the van. We spent the night near Dalnaspidal, and an easy half-day on the Friday took us to comfortable quarters at Dalwhinnie.

We were now of course travelling upon the Eastern Slope, but at Dalwhinnie we made a sensational plunge over to the West. I have never been able to discover the gradient of the hill that leads out of Dalwhinnie to the Spey Valley (which perhaps is just as well, as I might have

funked it if I had known the truth), but it leaps headlong up the mountain-side in the most startling manner, and as the surface was both rough and gravelly it took us just all our time to reach the top, which we did at a single burst. We remained up there for three or four adventurous miles, and as we approached the steep descent on the farther side a magnificent view opened out before us. That is the whole beauty of these cross-country marches from one valley to another. They are often very severe, but they are generally well worth it. One has the finest sensation of being perched on the top of things during the few miles across the ridge, in bleak, uninhabited country. And there is no way to enter upon a new neighbourhood that you are to explore to be compared with this of coming down from the heights above into the very heart of it. We left the Spey upon our right and joined company with a little stream, quaintly called the Pattack Water, which was going our way—to the West. It brought us soon to Loch Laggan, where we closed a long week—of 105 miles—in an exquisite little camp among the birches.

And now we travelled due West, along a curiously level road which runs across Inverness-shire for thirty miles without ever rising or falling

to any extent from its mean altitude of eight hundred feet, to Spean Bridge.

Again we swung sharply round to the North-East and headed up the Caledonian Canal, along that strange cleft in the mountains from coast to coast—as if Scotland had been split by a single blow from an axe—which they call the "Great Glen." It is, I am told, "a grave geological fault," but though geologists may shake their heads over it, it has no other fault that I could find. For those were memorable days. The scenery was magnificent and the road, almost the whole way along the canal, difficult and even dangerous. There are any number of water-courses to ford, though fortunately (after a spell of dry weather) there was little water in them; there are some awkward, narrow bridges, and at the head of Loch Oich the road loses itself to all intents and purposes in a great bed of gravel, continually reinforced by floods from the steep hillsides above. As there was a fairly sharp gradient at this point it was only with the greatest difficulty that we could pull across it, the wheels ploughing in a full six inches deep. Just above Fort Augustus we found a little quarry full of gorse, where we drew in for the night.

The next day's march along Loch Ness was

even more difficult and lay through even finer country. The road for a full ten miles is extremely hilly, narrow and twisty, with some surprising corners, and we were fortunate to meet the motor bus, that plies between Fort Augustus and Inverness, in open ground near Invermoriston. Otherwise we were bound to have arrived at a state of stalemate. For the early part of the day we were steadily burrowing through woods, but suddenly in the afternoon after climbing a precipitous little hill we shook off the trees and came out, three hundred feet above the water-side, with a grand view of the Great Glen and the long steel ribbon of Loch Ness. Though I am a farmer myself and belong to a hill country, I am still at a loss to understand how the fields to right and left of us were ever ploughed or harvested. Especially those on the lower side seemed to slant perilously to a sheer cliff above the loch. I fell to wondering if the turnips ever rolled over into the waters below when they were being shawed. That night we camped at Drumnadrochit.

There we left the canal and tacked once more to the West (though this time we never crossed the watershed), up Glen Urquhart and down Strath Glass. We met with a long and dangerous hill down to Invercannich, where we camped for

the night, with a gradient of 1 in 9. At one point I must own that we very nearly purled over into the young birch wood below, which might well have set a term to our ambitions. My new back brake was not fitted then, and at the best of times I do not care greatly about single-figure gradients.

That Saturday was the longest march of the tour. We had hoped to stop just beyond Beauly, but we could find no camp to suit us, and it was not till we had passed through Dingwall and reached the coast that we at last drew in to a little open space between the railway and the sea at the head of the Cromarty Firth. Twenty-seven miles. Fortunately it had been an easy level road, but the horses had clearly had enough of it, and Simon for the last half-hour had had all the air of walking in his sleep.

We had reached the Eastern limit of the map by now, but we were to make one more bold bid for the West in the week that followed.

CHAPTER IX

TO JOHN O' GROAT'S: II

We had now circumvented Inverness. I had always thought of Inverness as being somewhere at the top of Scotland, but in the next few weeks, as we pushed on and the trail lengthened out behind us, we were able to look back on it as dwindling in the distance to the South. In the meantime we had some welcome days of easy travel, through the fat and level lands of Easter Ross, a noble country of heavy pastures and splendid roads. On the Monday we touched the coast at many points and camped a mile or two inland, not far from Tain, and the next day our course lay along the Dornoch Firth to Bonar Bridge. There we entered Sutherland—a land bare of supplies, with few and meagre roads and, according to our brief experience, with an almost Arctic climate. I know very well that it was an exceptional summer, but I shall always think of Sutherland in June as providing a penetrating

quality of cold that is quite unknown in winter in the Alps.

After a fine march up the valley of the Shin, where the road hugs the rushing river close and whips about round boulders and over ridges of rock in the most sensational manner, we arrived at Lairg, which was to be our base for a fortnight to come, and after loading up larders, boxes and lockers, for we had little idea when we might see a shop again, camped in a wood by the road-side, a mile out of the town. It was there that we fell in with the Tinker and his family, who occupied a little shanty on the opposite side of the road, when they were not on tour. The whole of his tribe called in the evening to see the " gorryvon," and he himself did his best to dissuade us from our journey to the West.

" There's nothing to see at Scourie," he told me. " I wouldn't go to Scourie if I was blind of half an eye."

I do not know if I have succeeded in persuading you to look upon Scotland, through my eyes, as divided into four slopes to North, South, East and West. But perhaps a simple diagram will make the matter clear. Reduced to these plain terms, and seen, let us suppose, from a height on

the coast of Norway, the contour of the country would be represented thus :—

Here are only the Northern and Eastern slopes visible. The line C–D represents the coast-line from Berwick to John o' Groat's: and the line D–E the coast from John o' Groat's to Cape Wrath: while A–B is the main watershed that runs up the heart of the country, upon which every drop of rain that falls must make its choice whether it will go East or West, to the North Sea or the Atlantic—while such drops as may fall at the points A and B have a third alternative before them. The point A is in the neighbourhood of the Beef Tub, above Moffat. The point B is in the North of Sutherland, near Altnaharra. I hope that you can now picture the caravan SIEGLINDA, as I can, disappearing over the top, on the second day of our journey, to explore Loch Lomond—on the Western side—coming back into view somewhere near Killin and tracing a loop down the slope by Pitlochry and Blair Atholl: then charging up the steep hill at Dalwhinnie and vanishing from sight on the way to Spean Bridge.

Again she comes in view half-way up the Great Glen, and this time reaches the very foot of the slope at Dingwall. And now she has crept up to the top for the last time, on her way to Scourie. When she returns from this excursion she will head finally for the North.

We had no hope or intention of getting round the top left-hand corner of Scotland, for the roads as you draw near Cape Wrath are altogether barbarous. If we could but reach the coast we were quite ready to retrace our steps for thirty or forty miles. On the first day the road was remarkably level, though it had no other virtue. It was very narrow and the surface was all torn to pieces, soft and gravelly and covered with loose stones. We found it weary work, for many days to come, bumping along with little relief from the continual jarring and churning of the wheels. The country also that surrounds the chain of lochs, by which the road passes, is bleak and unkind and monotonously bare. Loch Shin sprawls half-way across the county without doing anything to improve the situation. Every mile of it is remarkably like the mile that went before and still more like the mile that follows.

On the second day, after toiling far over the crumbling track, we found most fortunate

camping-ground at the shooting-box at Lochmore, where we were handsomely treated. It was the last day of May, and we had travelled in the course of the month from the extreme South of Scotland to the North-West corner, a distance of 410 miles. I do not travel to make records, but I think, taking the country and the roads into consideration, that that one might be rather hard to beat. And now the coast was only six miles distant.

But again we failed. We had only a mile and a half to go when, just short of Laxford Bridge, we were confronted by a last barrier that pulled us up. Had it not been a question of returning the same way we might have done it, but when I went forward to prospect I found the hill upon the farther side not only steep and narrow, but with a broad patch of naked rock in the worst part of it that gave no sort of foothold. . . .

My Partner returned with SIEGLINDA to Lochmore while I walked on to Scourie, a distance of seven miles, for supplies. That part of the road is a sort of synopsis of all that is wildest, most hopeless and unprofitable in the county of Sutherland. It is a black forbidding gorge, a long-forgotten land of rock and crag and dark, repellent lochs. If I am ever blind of half an eye—

or even if I retain my sight—I doubt if I will again set out for Scourie. But I found a cheerful little village at the end.

At Lochmore we remained three days, overhauling and recuperating. It is a sheltered little spot, in contrast with its wind-swept surroundings. There are woods and hedges, and even so domestic a creature as a rhododendron flourishes about the shooting-box. And the mountains are fine, especially the keen, clear-cut peak of Ben More itself. Then we entrusted ourselves again to the slender thread of roadway and returned to Lairg without mishap. Almost the only other vehicle that we had to reckon with in this part of Sutherland was the nimble little motor-bus that plies all over the county. By dint of careful calculation we were always able to meet it in places where it was possible to pass, but we were decidedly fortunate in never arriving at a deadlock. There is no doubt that we were using more than our share of the road, and had we chanced to meet another SIEGLINDA at an awkward point a serious block in the traffic of the district must have occurred.

In Lairg the horses were shod, and we laid in such a stock of provisions as SIEGLINDA has never carried before or since, for, although the Tinker

assured me that he had a friend who kept a shop in Tongue where I would find everything that I wanted " the same as London," I knew very well that we were going into an almost uninhabited country, with poor prospect of supplies.

We had driven but a few miles to the North when we found ourselves up against an almost impassable obstacle. The road was being " boxed "—that is to say, a fresh foundation was being put in some two feet deep. There was nothing but soft moss on either side and there was, of course, no alternative road. Thus we had to cross some two or three hundred yards of jagged, close-packed rocks, not blinded or protected in any way. No one seemed to have considered the possibility of any traffic appearing in the course of the day, and there was nothing for it but to charge straight ahead, surging, groaning and swaying in the most horrible manner. The strain upon the springs was most painful to contemplate: to have forded a river would have tried them far less. But a single broken soap-dish was the full extent of the damage.

That evening we reached the Northern slope and camped by the road near Altnaharra. The march of the following day, from Altnaharra to

Tongue, was, I think, the dreariest and most painful pilgrimage that SIEGLINDA has ever made. The country was almost bereft of any evidence of life. For miles we travelled without a sign of deer or sheep or grouse : there were no rabbits : there was hardly even heather or common vegetation. Great uncouth mountains shut us in : rusted wire fences ran here and there. Yet it was not the scenery that distressed us so much as the climate. The cold was awful. I suppose that being in the North-East corner of Scotland we were favoured with the first-fruits of the North-East wind before it had suffered any tempering process. That was the only day in my experience when I found it possible to walk in comfort in two sweaters, while inside the van sat my Partner, who had already walked five or six miles in vain, wearing the greater part of her whole wardrobe, an ulster and a pair of gloves and " happed about " by a rug : yet quite unable to maintain a state of comfort. I got inside at last and lit the Primus and added a hot-water bottle to her accoutrements. The road was bad and we had a driving shower to meet. But we were amply rewarded for our heavy gruelling.

Unless you can clearly realize the tribulations of that march you will not appreciate the thrill

and keen delight with which we burst suddenly upon the view that welcomed us at the end. Coming off that most horrid moor it was like a well-prepared surprise to turn round the last sullen crag and behold before us the village of Tongue, beautifully sheltered and richly clothed with wood. The placid little bay was set about with fertile lands, while far away to the left towered the four splendid peaks of Ben Loyal, and beyond it all stretched forth the open sea.

We did not go down to the water-side, for I am always averse to squandering altitude that must be made good again, but camped in the upper part of the village, which they call Brae Tongue, at the junction of two roads.

That is not, I suppose, the finest view in Scotland, but I think it will always be reckoned so by my Partner and myself; and at least I make no doubt at all that Ben Loyal is the finest mountain. Its height, when I came to look it up, was disappointing, but I have never had much confidence in those fellows who calculate the heights of mountains. At any rate its outline is stately and imposing.

CHAPTER X

TO JOHN O' GROAT'S: III

AND now we were fairly in for it. It is a simple matter to get into Tongue, by the road by which we had come, but to get out of it—either East or West—is a heavy undertaking. We had two days' work before us, along the coast to Melvich, such as I had never before attempted, and there were not wanting many advisers, among those who inspected the expedition on the Sunday, who assured us that "we need never start," for we would soon be back again, having come to grief on Borgie Brae.

The whole of the top coast of Sutherland is one long succession of huge ridges, running towards the sea. It was as if we had abandoned the proper policy of following the valleys and had taken a perverse course, dead against the grain of the country. Before we reached Thurso we had to cross seven of these ridges, but they grew progressively less severe as we went on, like waves that gradually spend their force as they reach the

shore, till at last the undulations ceased and the road ran out across the level lands of Caithness.

Our worst hill of all fell on the first day, six miles from Tongue. Borgie Brae remains with us a vivid memory of a searching test surmounted, establishing the capabilities of SIEGLINDA and the team, setting a standard by which to judge of other hills. It is over a mile long, without a moment of relief; the surface is abominably soft and gravelly, so that the wheels bit in repeatedly; and the gradient is 1 in 11. In short, furious stages Sam and Simon plunged and struggled, scrambled and tugged up the perilous incline, and, that nothing might be wanting, it was our fate to meet a motor half-way up, so that we must pack ourselves close under the bank with one wheel down in the mud. But we never looked like being beaten. On the dreary flats at the summit we stopped to rest the steaming horses, looking back with the eye of conquerors on the gorge beneath. The slipper did us good service on the steep descent, and then we had two miles of easy going on the level at the foot of Strath Naver before facing the stiff rise to Bettyhill, where we camped in an open space above the sea. The Hotel Proprietor, who came to call in the evening, while congratulating us upon having

safely come so far, shook his head ominously over the road that lay before us on the morrow. Sam and Simon, who deserved better treatment, were bedded in sand that evening, for this was still a barren land and we could not even muster hay or bracken. I need perhaps hardly remark that it was bitterly cold.

We had nothing so bad as Borgie Brae to face on the Tuesday, but on the whole I think it was the heavier day of the two. Although we never reached a higher level above the sea than 500 feet we had to climb in all more than 1200 feet in fourteen miles. Only twice, on the tops of the last two ridges, had we any respite from the slipper and the roller, and then only for a mile in each case. The surface, however, was decidedly better than it had been on the day before, and when in the evening we camped on the moor above Melvich we knew that our troubles were over at last and our goal was well within reach. It is to be hoped that Sam and Simon had the wit to know that too—that they had taken a good look at the country before them as they turned in at the stable door ; for they were thoroughly exhausted, and I should not like to think that they went to sleep in anticipation of another such day to follow.

We got a fine dish of trout from the hotel at Melvich, which were most grateful, as I had been reduced to making bricks without straw at Bettyhill. The shop at Tongue, though well supplied with stamps and note-paper, exercise books, Shetland shawls, kettles, sou'wester hats, bars of soap, candles, pencils, clogs, red flannel and many other delightful things, had proved after all to be not quite like London. And as even eggs were difficult to obtain supplies were very low.

" For my pairt I like a mad contrast," to quote an old Scotch gardener of my acquaintance, who had been remonstrated with for decorating his parlour in a colour scheme of purple and pale green. And it would not be easy to conceive a madder contrast than that which met us on the following day. We had a last ridge to cross, but it was but a feeble one, sweeping up with a gradient of 1 in 20. All the sting had gone out of the thing by now. And after that we left the moor behind and passed on into a fertile land, with rich crops and fine cattle, well populated and flat as a table, as far as the eye could reach. The rough and narrow tracks of the last fortnight gave place to a broad highway of magnificent surface. Even the weather moderated. It was

hard to believe that we were still in Scotland, for the most striking feature of the landscape was the dykes, which in the county of Caithness are made entirely of paving-stones set on edge, and the total absence of trees added to the foreign aspect of the scene. Above all the names upon the sign-boards had a remote and alien flavour. We had been long accustomed to Altnaharras, Drumnadrochits, Overscaigs, and it was most startling to find ourselves (if the sign-posts were to be believed and had not been put there merely to entertain the wayfarer) among Brubsters, Lybsters and Scurrerys. When we came to understand something of the accent of Caithness-shire it did perhaps seem fitting that if people talked like that they should live in Scurrerys and Brubsters. And many of them are called Budge or Gunn : and one I met—I know it sounds a little too good to be true—who was called Gunn Budge. Altogether an enticing land of new discovery where we were well treated wherever we went.

That night we camped at a farm a mile from Thurso in a little lane, beneath a ten-foot wall. When Herbert reported " good broad stalls and any amount of straw," we felt that we could no longer deny the horses the rest they so sorely

needed, and there we remained till the Friday morning.

And that day, June 14th, having travelled in all 551 miles, we came to John o' Groat's.

Our appearance there was not without some dash and comely swagger. There is a little grassy knoll beside the hotel, and at the very edge of the beach, on which the House of John o' Groat is said to have stood. It was an octagonal house with a door in every side, so that John and his seven brothers—each entering by his own door at the same moment—could all take their places at the round table without raising any question of precedence. By this admirable invention John is said to have healed the bitter feuds that rent his family. But I have a notion that if they felt so strongly about it as all that, the experiment may not have been so successful as we are led to believe. The brother who entered by the northern door, especially as this must have been the first, or last, door in the British Isles, would be apt to put on airs in his dealings with him of the south-east. And I have an uncomfortable feeling that, despite his conciliatory attitude, John kept the north door for himself.

SIEGLINDA made the site of that historic house her own. For the little knoll remains, covered

with short turf, and rising to a height of perhaps twenty feet above the drive. Herbert gathered up the reins, and calling on the small knot of spectators, who had collected to welcome us, to stand aside, drove boldly to the top of it. There in a commanding posture SIEGLINDA came to rest.

Flat, open country, quite bare of trees, with a pleasant, scattered group of cottages and a post office—think of the triumphant telegrams that have been sent from it!—a sturdy little bare hotel: these comprise the outlook on the landward side. But out to sea there is a noble view of the fine outline of the Orkneys near at hand, and nearer still the intermediate island of Stroma and the Skerries; while far away round the corner of the Orkney cliffs lies the hazy outline of the Shetlands. It is a charming aspect, enlivened by the bustling traffic of the Pentland Firth, where dangerous currents sweep round the corner of the mainland. And the beach itself is pleasant sand and shingle, with riding boats at anchor and a little pier, and much disordered tackle of the lobster fishing, whose operations we watched from our windows.

We had high good fortune in the weather, for the clouds had rolled away, the wind had fallen and the evening lights among the islands to the

North were of an exquisite beauty. The sun went down bang behind the Orkneys, casting a long quivering bar of ruddy gold across the firth and right into the door of Herbert's tent, and the sky was alight with shimmering clouds till well after ten o'clock. We were of course uplifted with the thought of having reached our goal, and among my grateful memories of this great journey the evening that we spent at John o' Groat's stands first.

There was one who came to tell us of a motor caravan which had camped there once, though not upon our knoll. But that news did not concern us. For I have never had any dealings with, nor taken any sort of interest in, that unholy hybrid.

I think that John o' Groat's must be the most entertaining place to live. It is remote and lonely enough no doubt, twenty miles from the railway and with nothing more than a little hamlet at the back of it, but there can be no monotony in the lives of those who live there. They are not in touch perhaps with Wick or Thurso, but they are always in touch with Land's End. We are all at heart lovers of records, and these happy folk may be said to live in a record neighbourhood, at the farthest distance to the North. And they have

other special privileges. They never know at what hour of the day some traveller from Land's End may come in sight at the bend of the road. And these are no ordinary travellers. They are record-breakers, panting, watch in hand, to their goal. Every new form of locomotion must sooner or later make the journey. There was a day when the first coach drove up: then came the first bicycle: the first motor: the first motor-bicycle. After a while they came in flocks, or arrived in a swift succession, ending a headlong race. There are days when all the space about the hotel is covered with motor-bicycles, begrimed with eight hundred miles of "trials." I do not know if the first aeroplane has yet alighted there, but it cannot now be long delayed. And there are also, as an element of comic relief to these stern endeavours, all manner of cranks and faddists and queer people who have made the journey from the far coast of Cornwall—old men, who for a wager are proving pedestrian powers that have defied the years, vegetarians, who are doing the course upon lentils, one who has sworn to push his wife in a Bath-chair perhaps, another who has vowed to do it in a Roman toga and sandals. John o' Groat's is the end and goal of all of them, and to run a hotel there must be, I think, among

the most diverting occupations open to mankind —giving fine scope to a landlord, for all his medley of quaint pilgrims, whatever else they lack, are sore in need of kindly hospitality. . . .

And now in the fulness of time came also a horse-drawn caravan.

CHAPTER XI

OTHER JOURNEYS

THAT was the finest campaigning march that SIEGLINDA has ever undertaken. To the caravanner who wants the sternest test of his powers and who is prepared for a journey of many weeks with a great goal at the end, this road to John o' Groat's offers perhaps the most striking opportunity in the British Isles. The route by which we travelled can of course be very much simplified and the distance reduced by almost two hundred miles. By following the Great North Road to Inverness the dangers and difficulties of the Caledonian Canal can be left out : and by sticking to the coast of Sutherland as far as Helmsdale and then taking the road up Strath Halladale (by which we returned), all the worst of the Sutherland hills may be avoided. But even thus, whittled down to its simplest elements, it is a fine campaign. I suppose, in the nature of things, if all goes well, I shall some day drive SIEGLINDA to Land's End, and I have plans for

an extended tour in Wales, though in Ireland I fear I may hardly find roads to carry me to all the places where I ought to go. But I do not expect ever again to repeat that great experience of swinging in zigzags up the heart of Scotland to the uttermost corner at the top.

That is one type of caravanning: it is of course not the only one; not necessarily the best. There may be very few of us who are attracted by a stiff journey from point to point, such as this. There remains a wide choice in other directions. It is open to us to explore a whole neighbourhood, by a tangle of cross-journeys, or to follow a river from source to sea, or to make our camps more permanent and move ponderously at intervals of several days from place to place. We may go at midsummer and live to the full the outdoor life, or we may go in autumn and hug the shelter of the caravan. We may plunge into new country or search out familiar scenes. I am not going to say that any one of these methods is any better than another, except that for my part I am done with aimless wandering. I must have some form of achievement before me. And I am sure that a caravan journey loses much of its spice when it is made through well-known country, without

the stimulus of fresh discovery. I do not greatly care to start the day with no unanswered questions before me, and it is rather a tragic reflection that I have by now pretty well used up Scotland, regarded as caravanning material. Perhaps I would have been wiser to have husbanded and hoarded it more cannily. Yet there are compensations in retracing one's steps. All anxiety and delay in the matter of camping are done away with and it is worth something to be able to drive straight in and take the horses out at the end of a long day. I have now established an almost unbroken chain of camping-grounds from Moffat to Inverness and made good friends at most of them.

In describing my journey to John o' Groat's I have dealt only with the campaigning side of caravanning, and it now remains to put before you what I have called the human and domestic sides in greater detail. I do not set out to give you a definite chronicle day by day of my other Scotch journeys, but rather to make use of them to throw light from as many different points as possible upon the real nature of Caravan Days—to try to answer the question from which we started of What Caravanning Is.

But I should briefly indicate what these

journeys were. I suppose it is the common fate of explorers to feel " a sort of a tameness "—if I may quote the photographer of Bonar Bridge—on the homeward way. And when we turned South up Strath Halladale and met for the first time the midday sun pouring full into the front of the caravan, we began to ask ourselves if this was all, if there were no other worlds to conquer. And it was then that we fell upon the happy idea of traversing every mainland county of Scotland.

I may as well say at once that we failed. There is one county where the caravan SIEGLINDA has never been : and that is rather a sore point with us. If the reader has ever made 99 not out, or lost an election by a single vote, he will be the better able to understand our feelings with regard to the county of Argyll, which is the blot on our fair record, the missing scalp at our belt, the drop that failed to fill the cup. There had been an evening on Loch Lomond when we were camped within two miles of Argyll, with a level road between us, but then our thoughts were full of Caithness, and the golden opportunity passed by. But that is the only county that remains.

Our first move was to establish a Highland

Base at Inverness, to which we repeatedly returned. We found a snug and comfortable little farm, two or three miles out on the Perth road, where the van rested upon the grassy roadway of a disused avenue among overarching beeches. There was an excellent pump at hand : there was first-class grazing for the horses in the paddock where we stood : there was wealth of dog-roses : and in his cottage not a hundred yards away dwelt Peter the ploughman, who took the whole establishment under his wing.

On the way back in that first summer we turned East along the coast, gathering up a county a day at the outset—for the new enterprise started with great dash and impetus—and camping in succession in Nairn, Elgin, Banff and Aberdeen. At Montrose we turned inland and travelled West to the Trossachs, adding Kincardine and Forfar to our bag. Then we turned South and home through Stirling.

In May and June, 1913, we went right up the heart of Scotland, crossing by the Ferry at the Forth Bridge, and made a great march across Ross-shire to the West Coast, returning to Inverness, where we left the van for some weeks. This tour took in Midlothian, Linlithgow, Fife and Kinross. In the autumn of that year we set out

from Inverness and came due South and across the Clyde, afterwards exploring the whole of the Border Country. This added Clackmannan, Ayr, Wigtown, Kirkcudbright, Roxburgh, Berwick, Haddington and Selkirk.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE DAY IS SPENT

I SHOULD like to give you an idea of just how a day is passed in SIEGLINDA, when my Partner and I are travelling alone and under normal conditions—that is, if we are to admit that there are any normal conditions on a caravan tour. I am not at all sure that there are.

We get up at 6.30. I know very well that the true rampant, enthusiastic caravanner (whom I have met with more than once) gets up long before that. He is fond of commenting upon the weather conditions that obtained when he was breakfasting at 5 a.m. For my part I have never been able to get the machinery under way much before 6.30. The middleroom has been cleared overnight and is now used as a bathroom, furnished by that delightful utensil, the rubber bath. While my Partner is making the beds and Herbert is feeding the horses I am at work on the breakfast, which is ready by 7.30. There is, I should say, an iron punctuality about these

morning hours. Breakfast on travelling days is severely simple, alternating regularly between bacon and boiled eggs. Thereafter comes the busiest hour of the day. Herbert strikes his tent and slings it in the crutch and then goes to his horses. I trim the wicks and fill the oil-tanks, and my Partner washes up. We then stow away the dishes and pots and pans, shut down the tables and chairs, take off the door (which travels inside so as to give an uninterrupted view from the front), bring out canvas chairs (for the kitchen has now, you will understand, become a sort of verandah), run a cord across the front of the stove to prevent the oil-tanks from slipping out down hill, sweep out, fix wads here and there to prevent things from jingling, stow away the steps under the table, sling buckets underneath, lock up the back boxes and put on the shafts. Finally the copper box, which still contains a pint or two of hot water, is emptied into the basin in the bedroom, thus providing a most necessary hot wash when all our jobs are over.

There is now a pleasant interval before the horses appear, when one may sit down and smoke a pipe and ponder upon the map and contour book. These pursuits are interrupted by a distant " clop-clop " in the lane, and Sam and

Simon come into view, the former looking round and considering the weather and the scene, the latter still chewing a last wisp of disreputable herbage which he has picked up somewhere, unobserved by Herbert. They are duly harnessed to the twin pairs of shafts—double shafts are in my opinion much safer and more satisfactory than a pole when it comes to bumping about on uneven ground—Herbert hops up into the doorway and we swing out on to the road about 9 a.m.

I strongly believe in making a single journey in each day, never stopping for lunch or for any other reason that can be avoided, pushing on as rapidly as possible and camping early. The horses are never fed on the road, though they are always watered once, about midday. The morning is the chief time for walking. I like to walk ten miles before lunch, though I often fall a little short of this figure, and my Partner, who is a methodical pedestrian, divides the day into stages with intervals between, in such a way as to be always outside on steep hills, and puts in about six or seven miles. After about an hour she will get inside and set to work upon the lunch. Lunches are her masterpiece. From the hard-boiled egg with which they open to the small

A Week-end Camp

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chunk of plain chocolate with which they close, and in the blend of lime-juice with which they are accompanied, they never fail to fit the case.

We lunch, as we go along, about half-past twelve, and after that one is tempted to sit inside for a few miles.

Travelling, with all allowances for stoppages, at about three miles an hour, it will be manifest that by three o'clock we shall have come some eighteen miles. Then we begin to look for camping-ground. But whatever the position of affairs, whether we intend to go some miles farther or not, the Primus is lit at 3.15 and on goes the kettle. That is a great point. There are often long delays at camping time, and it is a period of the day when a certain sense of weariness is not unknown. A cup of tea has a powerful effect upon one's outlook and should never be postponed after its appointed time.

As soon as we are in camp the shafts are taken off, steps put out, door put on, tables and chairs put up. My Partner sweeps out the day's accumulation of motor dust. Herbert fills the hot and cold water tanks and then devotes himself to his horses. And I get round to the back boxes and begin to consider the question of supper. My Partner is now discharged from all active duties till the

time comes to set the table, and if I have no very exacting meal to cook it is likely that I also, as soon as the stove is running well, may slip away to the bedroom to change and rest for half an hour. In any case I shall have time enough while the supper is maturing to write up the diary and mark off the route upon the map. This also is the hour for pleasant gossip with one's neighbours, for receiving a call perhaps from the farmer's wife or going with the grieve to look round the stock.

We have supper at 7.30, and after that we throw the burden of washing-up upon Herbert's shoulders, get out the candles, draw the curtains and relapse into secluded domesticity. And we go to bed about half-past nine or ten. The long evenings when one may play about outside after supper are not to be despised, but I think I like SIEGLINDA best on a chill October night, say, when her candles are all lit and the stove burns low in the kitchen, and if there be a scampering patter of rain-drops on the roof, there is no doubt but it adds an extra spice.

Herbert looks in with his stable lantern to ask about the morning's milk and then goes off to his tent and we are left alone.

CHAPTER XIII

INCIDENTS AND PREDICAMENTS

ALL the towns that we passed through are classified in my diary under four headings. Class A is a small and distinguished group made up of the very pick of the basket, of such places as I hold to be laid out with elegance and efficiency and to occupy by nature a perfect situation. There are dozens of jolly places in Class B. Class C is by no means so attractive, but it is a small class. Finally Class D is reserved for such places as we felt we had good reason to resent, where things turned against us in one way or another. We had a bad time in Crieff. There we wasted the greater part of a hot and dusty afternoon trying to get the van weighed on a weigh-bridge that was two inches too short. We were not lucky in our shopping, and I forgot to post the letters. Crieff is perhaps not to blame for that; but it is assuredly to blame for possessing a central square so outrageously tilted up on edge as to make a most dangerous corner in the busiest part of the

town. That was before the days of my back brake, and if anything had gone wrong with the slipper (and they are not very chancy things—slippers) we should certainly have been through a shop window at eight or ten miles an hour. Then there was Wick, where we met with a congested state of juvenile population, so that SIEGLINDA moved up the street through surging human billows. The shops in Wick were mixed up in a most unpleasant way. I like a butcher to confine himself to the sale of meat and a baker to concentrate upon breadstuffs. But in Wick it is quite easy to buy toys in a greengrocer's or butter in a boot-shop, while no chemist is in the swim who does not offer such things as potatoes and bananas for sale.

We reached Kingussie with empty larders, having laid in no supplies for four or five days, to find a Spring Holiday in progress and the shops all shut. We divided the crew into three separate pillaging parties and set out to see what we could find. The Old Campaigner—whom I must introduce to you later—worked round the hotels and had a very fair bag, and my Partner and I were strikingly successful. Acting as I thought on a brilliant inspiration I had made my way to the

station and broken into the refreshment room. But I found that my Partner, who had had the same idea, was there before me. So we joined forces and formulated a long list of demands. The man in charge gladly put his stores at our disposal, and we bore away tea, sugar, butter, a loaf of bread and many other things. We also added to the interesting collection of china in SIEGLINDA several new and valuable pieces belonging to the Highland Railway Company, but these were restored later on at a station farther up the line.

The next day I discovered an obscure butcher's shop, so called. It was a small wooden erection, modestly lurking by a little stream some way off the road; and it was locked up, nor was there any sign of a proprietor. But by peering in at the window I observed, not without some excitement at the discovery, a leg of mutton hanging all alone in the gloom. I made a good many enquiries and was not long in introducing myself to a washer-woman, hard at work before her tub, who was forced to admit that the shop belonged to her, that it did happen to have a leg of mutton in it and that she was quite prepared to sell it, if I insisted. I wondered, as I went away with my parcel, if I had unwittingly cut

short the career of that little shop or if the proprietrix would set to work to get another leg of mutton.

It is, I know, most unfair to harbour any animosity against Crieff or Kingussie, and even Wick may surely be allowed to enjoy its special local customs. But I have a fair case against Hawick. That irrepressible township had been making experiments in street surfaces and had hit at last upon a sort of amalgam, delightfully adapted to motor tyres, which had been lavishly laid down. I don't know what the mixture was, and I hope that by this time the recipe for it has been publicly burned at the Town Cross. On the first damp day after the new experiment sixteen horses fell, as we were to learn afterwards, and one of them had to be shot. It was a damp morning when we arrived, and it was with the utmost difficulty that we could scratch and stumble up the main street. We had not gone far when Sam fell, breaking the harness. We got him up, and with a dozen people pushing behind made another cautious start, but down he went again, after a miserable period of sliding and slithering, with further breakages. This time we had some difficulty in getting him on his legs, and it was not till we had dried up the street with a piece of sacking

that he and Simon could get grip enough to move the van at all.

But I have more than that to tell you of Hawick. We had approached it on the previous day by way of the Mosspaul Inn. At a telegraph office on our road I got down to send a dispatch to the Journalist's Wife—one of our frequent visitors—who was to join us for a couple of nights. We knew that she would reach Hawick about twelve o'clock.

She was to walk up the valley till she found the caravan, but first she was to call at the post office to see if there was a telegram. Being Monday the Postmistress of the office was much preoccupied with the wash when I arrived, and I cannot think that she was as successful in keeping her private duties separate from her official responsibilities as she might have been : and yet one must sometimes send a telegram on a Monday. Washing operations spread themselves freely over the room. However I secured a partially dry telegraph form at last and wrote my message hoping for the best. It was not perhaps to be wondered at, for it had a poor take-off among the soap-suds, that it reached Hawick in a slightly garbled state with the name wrongly spelt.

We had a great camp in a flat field close to the

Teviot, richly endowed with mushrooms, and as soon as we were settled my Partner went off to meet the Journalist's Wife, who, by the way, is a sister of hers. We were only four miles from Hawick, and it was soon apparent that she was not a little overdue. But it was not till about five o'clock that we began to be alarmed. At six I set off and walked into the town. My first enquiry was at the post office. There I found my telegram, and although the name was not correct I was assured that it was quite certain that no one had asked for it. From this it seemed to be clear that the traveller had never reached Hawick, so I sent a prepaid message to ask if she had ever started, got hold of a cab and drove past the camp to a post office half a mile up the road and there gave instructions for the answer to be delivered to us as soon as it came. Then I went back to dinner. So far we were not at all troubled about the matter. She had probably never started, and we were not likely to hear any more that night. But long after eight o'clock arrived one with a stable lantern, who had been wandering about the fields in the dark looking for us, bearing a telegram. From this we learned that she had indeed started by the train due at Hawick at 12.10.

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

She had set out then—and she had never reached Hawick. We asked ourselves the solemn question, which must have occurred to many in like straits—What would Sherlock Holmes do now? The first thing to do was to send Herbert to borrow a bicycle. He had no difficulty there, but it took him a very long time to find a lamp, and when he did it was an archaic and almost impossible one; and it was about nine o'clock before I started on my second journey to Hawick. We had concluded that the central clue in the mystery was the Typewriter. The Wanderer, we knew, had a typewriter, and as she was not likely to carry it with her, it should be at the station—if she had ever arrived. My lamp went out three or four times, but I made a fairly good pace none the less, and immediately ran the typewriter to earth in the left luggage office.

Very well—she had reached Hawick after all. It now seemed good to me to discover *when* she reached Hawick. The only available porter had not been on duty then, and the books did not show. All right. Where did the station-master live? Not very far away, but he was already going to bed. I fortuitously attracted his attention more rapidly than I might otherwise

have done by stepping into a bowl of water, left for the dog at the top of a dark flight of stone steps, and rolling it down noisily to the bottom. That was the sort of way things went on with me throughout this wild evening. The station-master, however, soon had on his discarded garments and came back with me to the station. Investigation showed that at the time when the typewriter was handed in Tom had been on duty. Very well. Where did Tom live? The porter went out to enquire.

It was about ten o'clock when the porter and I set off, taking the typewriter with us so that there might be no mistake, to dig out Tom. We reached a tall house in a back street after a time and climbed four flights of dark stone steps. No, Tom didn't live up there. He lived on the ground floor. Down we came again. His landlady was fortunately still up—or perhaps I should say partially up—but Tom was in bed and asleep. We both made our way into his room and lit the gas.

Tom was a pleasant-looking fellow with very red hair, and a remarkably heavy sleeper. We had the utmost difficulty in getting anything out of him. But at last he sat up. It had been a long and weary quest, but now we had him. The

porter set the typewriter upon the bed and asked him if he recognized it. Oh, yes. He knew it. Well, when had it been handed in? Tom pondered profoundly, and I was glad of that. I did not want him to make up his mind in a hurry.

"Think, Tom," said I.

"Do you remember?" demanded the porter. We waited.

"Aye," said Tom suddenly, his sleepy countenance lighting up, "I mind the noo. I ken fine. It was handit in by a French toorist off the 9.50."

As the Wanderer had not left Edinburgh till ten that did not help us much. Back we went to the station and left the typewriter. And then I set out to try the hotels and other likely places. It was getting pretty late and I had some difficulty in breaking into some of them: and I met with many more flights of dark stone steps before I was done. So at last I lit my lamp again, which instantly and finally went out, got on the bicycle and returned unilluminated to SIEGLINDA.

She had reached Hawick—but if so, why had she not got the telegram?

She had not reached Hawick—but if so, how had the typewriter got there?

Even if she had failed to get the telegram she

must have walked on—but if so, why had she not arrived ?

She had gone up the wrong valley—but she knew the road, having been over it a year before.

All the same, she had mistaken the road, for the two valleys are very much alike—but in that case she could not have gone far without finding out that she was lost, and all this was about twelve hours ago. Where was she now ?

It only remained, as far as we could see, to get a motor in the morning and search the county of Roxburgh. So we lit a lamp at the front of the van, where it could be seen from the road, and went to bed. I was only clear about one thing—that I was not going back into Hawick. I felt that I had exhausted Hawick.

About 5.30 a.m. the voice of the Journalist's Wife was heard at the bedroom window, and I got up, opened the door and put the kettle on.

She explained that she had arrived: deposited her typewriter and asked at the post office for a telegram. She was told that there was none, so she started to walk up the valley, not knowing of course how far we were from Hawick. She had crossed the bridge two miles out of the town by mistake and gone on up the Borthwick Valley

for several miles. Then she found out that something was wrong, and took a short cut across the hills to the Teviot Valley. This had brought her on to our road just about half a mile above the camp, and thereafter she had walked blissfully on, away from the van, for about nine miles. She was told by a passer-by—perhaps a relative of Tom's ?—that there was a caravan camped at Mosspaul Inn. It was getting dark when she reached the inn. There she stayed the night. Taking the road again at 5 a.m. she had fallen in with a friendly motorist, who had given her a lift to the gate of our field. And, well, there she was.

To this adventure I owe my remarkable inside knowledge of the town of Hawick. When we drove in on the following day it was almost like a home-coming to me.

It was at the last of all our camps, at the foot of St. Mary's Loch, while Herbert was busily at work upon the final furbishing of SIEGLINDA, previous to the Annual Inspection, that one arrived on a bicycle with a message. There was, he reported, a gentleman at the Rodono Hotel, who had sent him up to ask if Mr. Smith would be so good as to lend his horses to pull his motor out of the cabbages. There were no other horses

within reach that were equal to it, and he did not want to be held up for the week-end.

Well !—I must ask you to reflect not upon the things I have said, or may still have to say, about motorists in this narrative, but on the things—the horribly vituperative things—that in nearly every chapter I have left unsaid. I thought of that long list. I thought of the helpless Sam, heaving and scrambling in the streets of Hawick. And now I was to be called upon to heap coals of fire. There is nothing, in reality, that I like better to see than a motor-car in a cabbage patch. . . . Yes, Mr. Smith would send up his horses at once.

The car was lying down a steep bank, eight or ten feet below the road, and on the very edge of the loch. So near, in fact, that I could but reflect that one hearty shove when no one was looking— . . . It had carried away many feet of the dyke as it went over, and the whole of the bank above it was deep in scattered stones, so that Sam and Simon could get no proper foothold at all. And it was already growing dark. Some eight or ten men had been assembled and were busily at work, lifting the wheels out of their deep troughs, removing cabbages and affixing ropes. At the first attempt the rope broke, and at the second,

though both horses did their best, it became clear that, standing as they were among the wreckage of the dyke, they could not possibly succeed.

To Simon belongs the whole credit of this fine exploit. He may be a little overshadowed in my pages by the prowess of his companion. It is true that he has not the same gifts of temperament. But let me pay him this tribute. Alone he did it. There was only room for one horse to work on the road above, when at last we had lengthened out the ropes to try a new system of haulage. The track of the broken dyke was well smothered in hay—the wheels were boosted up out of the soft earth—sundry lanterns were lit, for it was practically dark by now. Then the many workers stood back, and with a vast heave and steady forward rush the great car charged and bumped up the incline and came to rest on the level road.

CHAPTER XIV

MINCED SCOTLAND

I WISH I could convey to you just how Scotland appears to me now that I have traversed over two thousand miles of its roadways. It is no longer a matter of tracts and distances and vast contours. By my painstaking curriculum I have won for myself a clear-cut possession of the whole in manageable morsels and am able to see it intimately and close at hand, so that I feel myself to be on terms with every neighbourhood, not as one who has passed through it, but almost as a resident. For I have possessed myself not only of mountains and valleys, towns and railway stations, striking scenes and expanded views, but of fields and cottages and burns, of glimpses down leafy lanes, of springs and wells and bathing pools, of sheltered moorland quarries, of wayside shops, of countless tiny bridges and mossy gullies, of farmyards and cottage gardens and a wealth of small familiar things. To hear the name of a village in Kincardineshire will recall to me in an

instant the picture of a little girl in an orchard, looking up wistfully into the branches of an apple tree where her black kitten has taken refuge: Biggar always presents the figure of an extremely stout old lady in black, who is poking about the hedgerows in search of groundsel for her canary: there is a misprint on a milestone not far from Killin: there is a lady stone-breaker in Sutherland who makes fine practice among the flints: there is a breed of white turkeys near Fort Augustus. I am only giving you a few trivial memories drawn at random from my bag, but enough perhaps to show the nature of the reward that falls to the slow-going caravanner. The one fatal blunder that he can make is to try to travel any faster than his natural pace. The motor caravan . . . But I am not going to begin to talk about that.

I believe I have come to understand as I never did before the motives of the many different roads that I have travelled. Some of them are headlong, stubborn and direct: stiff and unbending, impatient of rise or fall, intent upon their destination. Others are more wayward and fanciful, by no means in so much of a hurry, quite content to climb a knoll or skirt the shoulder of a hill. Some seem hardly to have made up their

minds clearly where they are bound for: they hesitate and weigh alternatives. Others simply wander frivolously. We travelled up the North side of the Dee to Braemar, upon that magnificent Royal Road that sweeps from Aberdeen to Balmoral, rising a thousand feet without even a momentary acknowledgment, in the shape of a sharp hill—a powerful, arrogant road, subduing a rough valley to its traffic. But we came back by the road on the South side, which is of a wholly different nature, adapting itself more genially to the country it must traverse, content to be smilingly deflected from its line, twisting about into divers pleasant places, free to indulge in sharp corners and unexpected undulations. It gave us noble views of the valley, and it was with much regret that we parted company at Aboyne, but as I suspected it of an intention to lead us astray into the Grampians at that point we thought it best to cross the river. Another delectable road of the same sort is that which runs through Duns, Greenlaw and West Gordon. It seemed to me to have very little preference as to which way it went so long as it touched a township, for the sake of appearances, now and then. There are some patient, long-suffering roads which always appear to be grudgingly making the best

of the great natural difficulties that beset them, such as the feeble track that we followed in Sutherland, which started up each new incline with a sigh, hunching its shoulders peevishly, but toiling on. And there are headlong roads, which sweep and leap forward, making nothing of the heights they have to scale. Many try to deceive you by an old device, which the caravanner can afford to smile at. It is to bring you to the top of a steep dip, down and up, at such an angle that the rise on the far side looks far stiffer than it is, looks actually precipitous. But you have only to go boldly forward to see it come down as you descend and lose its sting, till, behold, it is almost level after all. You have found it out.

There is of course immense variety in the chance scenes that I remember. We are travelling from Dunkeld to Inverness, and in response to a sudden sporting impulse we turn off our route to explore the Tummel Valley as far as Kinloch Rannoch. After we have come out of the sharp little nick that encloses the bridge across the Garry we find ourselves in very heavy country, with seven miles of almost continuous climb on a wet, rough road with sharp gradients here and there. The conditions are not improved by a

succession of plumping showers, and not till we have scratched up a sudden rise of 1 in 12 do we arrive, wet and weary, at the top and draw in at the roadside for tea. Walking a few yards through the trees while the kettle boils we come out unexpectedly upon that jutting crag which they call the Queen's View. It takes our breath away, for at that moment the sun comes out and lights the whole astounding prospect of Schiehallion towering on the left and Loch Tummel winding up the valley hundreds of feet below.

Or we drive sleepily along the flat to pay a call in Troon. This would be something worth seeing we had reason to believe. But I suppose we have too many golfers among our friends and had thus come to a false impression. For golfers never know. They are always telling me that such and such a place—Silloth, Seascale, Troon and many more—is simply glorious. I say that I suppose they mean the links are glorious, and they reply—yes, that is so, but there is far more in it than that. It isn't only the golf. It is such a magnificent neighbourhood in itself. I know now that it isn't true. In the same way people used to ask me to go to dances, and when I said I didn't dance, explained that that was of no importance as there

was always plenty to do at a dance. The only conclusion is that if you are devoted to golf or dancing you are apt to become afflicted with blindness to other affairs. The great golfing centres that we visited have been the least interesting from any other point of view. They are generally wind-swept and unlovely, and if they have special natural beauties—like the Gairloch—the golf is correspondingly bad. I am afraid that I cannot report on the links at Troon. I hope they are all right. But we spent a pleasant afternoon there, while SIEGLINDA waited in a broad, still, empty street, and our friends met us half-way with an early tea which was badly wanted.

There are many memories of farm kitchens, and of cottage firesides, of calls paid, evenings spent and suppers eaten. I see myself again pillaging the kitchen garden of a farm at the Yetts of Muckhart, whose owner's one desire was that each and all of his vegetables should be represented in the next SIEGLINDA stew. I see myself in a shop in Newton Stewart, confronted to my amazement by a Cold Sweet Ayrshire Haggis. I see myself loading up a trap at Cockburnspath and bringing home the wash from the station, which had been left behind at Coldstream

a week before, while the driver entertains me fully with the ancient history of the place. I see the caravan, tightly fitted on the deck of the ferry boat, tossing on a stormy sea beneath the Forth Bridge, while Sam and Simon stamp impatiently.

It is fit that I should record my opinion that Ross-shire is, without question, the finest county in Scotland. My judgment may of course be in error, for my data, it will be remembered, are not quite complete. I have never been in Argyll. But the others I know, and looking back upon them, now that the collection is complete, and passing them in review I count Ross-shire as the best of all. It is the only county (for Sutherland, I need hardly say, does not compete) which has a share in the special features of both Eastern and Western Coasts. Easter Ross is a noble country, rich in all good things, beautifully situated about the Cromarty, Dornoch and Beauly Firths, magnificently wooded and well farmed. There is high moorland in the heart of it, and on the Western side Gairloch and Maree and other glorious places. And when you add to all that the Conon Valley you would almost seem to have within this single county the very gist and substance of the scenery of Scotland. As for the

inhabitants I could wish no caravanner a better fate than to be cast adrift among them. He will find that all the affairs and operations of his journey are made easy where everyone is so anxious to assist him.

CHAPTER XV

SAM AND SIMON

THERE is no doubt that they served us well, and even if it is true, as his detractors will have it, that Sam got us into trouble on every possible occasion that offered, it is only fair to look on the other side of the question. His exploits were never without their humorous and individual features. I am not sure, take it all in all, that he was not the most entertaining member of the expedition. On looking back I find I shall have little to relate of Simon. Beyond his singular behaviour one night at Amulree, when he lay on his back with a nose-bag on and rolled joyously from side to side—by which exercise he was naturally very nearly choked—he did nothing worth recording in these pages, though he often acted as aider and abettor of Sam.

Herbert firmly believes in big farms. He likes to know that there are sufficient resources on the spot to sustain his horses overnight. He is never quite happy when they are lying out, unless they

are well up to their knees in clover, and when they are stabled he must satisfy himself on many points about the quality of the hay. When we are among farms of anything less than a thousand acres he grows contemptuous and speaks of the country as being laid out "rather on the small holding principle." I do not wish to disparage Herbert in this respect. As long as I am hustling him along to the tune of a hundred miles a week he must, as he says, "keep his horses up." And I was often sorry for him in Sutherland, where the stabling was outrageous and little fodder was to be had. We were camped one night at a fishing hotel whose stable was small, dark, dirty and overrun with hens, and one of the guests happened to stop and admire the horses as Herbert was resentfully rubbing them down.

"Horses?" said Herbert scornfully. "Horses? It's no use bringing horses here. You don't want horses when you tour in Sutherland."

"Oh? What do you want?"

"You want something that you can throw away every night when you've done with it. For there's nowhere to put 'em."

Quite the worst thing I shall have to tell about Sam happened at Tweedsmuir. I would leave it out if I could, but I can't. Had I had any

intention of obscuring the truth I should not have waited till now to begin. I should have said boldly that we had been in Argyll.

We had camped rather rashly on soft ground, and it had rained all night, so that it was clear that SIEGLINDA would need a good lift to pull her out. But Sam met us with a blank refusal. He never made the least endeavour. We had a full two hours of it in heavy rain: we dug out the wheels: we ploughed up the turf in all directions: we brought boards and sticks and levers. We did in fact all the various things that we had so often, with a superior smile, read of other caravanners having to do in like straits. Herbert worked away with great patience, but once his temper was up nothing would induce Sam to move. Twice he fell and the harness went in three different places, and ever we ploughed deeper in. And at last we gave him up.

There was a carter passing with a light little horse (which Sam could have put in his pocket) and we called them in as reinforcements. And so Sam was allowed to look on while the faithful Simon (who had been doggedly doing his best), with this little ally by his side, put his back into it with a sudden heave and brought the van with a run through the gate.

That was not a pleasant episode, but Sam only tried it once again—in a lane near Kinross the following Monday—and that time we were much better placed with a good level road before us, where Herbert was able to deal with him: and soon he found, yet again—his life is full of these discoveries—that it was not so good a game as he had thought.

He had us in difficulties again on the Sunday that we spent at Stonehaven. To understand the wanton wickedness of his behaviour on this occasion it is necessary to state that at Peterculter both horses had been shod. The blacksmith there—he was, I think, our premier blacksmith, the best shoer of horses that we met with—was overwhelmed with admiration of Sam's feet, which demanded no less than seventy-two inches of his best iron. Such fine material had he to work upon and so admirable a job did he make of it that he besought us to lend him Sam—for a week. That might have slightly upset our arrangements, and we were forced to refuse him. But he had assured us that he would keep him well and feed him on the fat of the land. There was, at the Agricultural Show which was due in a week's time, a competition for the best-shod horse in the North, and it was a safe thing

for him if only we would consent to a trifling delay.

You are to picture then these beautiful feet with seventy-two inches of the best iron distributed among them, free from the slightest blemish. You are to picture Herbert's frame of mind when he found Sam on the Monday morning with one shoe missing and one hoof badly broken. It is impossible to guess how he had contrived to get it off—there is always an element of mystery about Sam's nocturnal doings—but there it was. And more than that, the shoe had disappeared. The horses were alone in a small and painfully bare field.

Herbert in moments of severe exasperation is given to picturesque language, and he now declared that in his opinion Sam, having wrenched it off, had wandered about with the shoe in his mouth till he found a suitable hiding-place. I don't believe that there was more than a single rabbit-hole in that field. But the shoe was found in that rabbit-hole at the end of three-quarters of an hour of diligent search. We had to patch it on as best we could to keep going till we reached a blacksmith some three miles down the road. But Sam's feet have never again been quite what they were at Peterculter.

One morning as we approached Dunkeld, while all the members of the crew were out upon the road some way in advance of the van, Sam, startled by a passing train, suddenly plunged and fell. It was fortunate that we were within hail, as had we been round the bend of the road we would no doubt have gone blithely on for several miles while Herbert sat patiently upon Sam's head, waiting for the assistance of the passer-by. It was rather a tangled mess at the first glance, and would soon have been much worse had it not been for the stolid and comfortable behaviour of Simon, who allowed himself to be unyoked and taken out, stepping clear of Sam's prostrate legs as he went by without the least expression of resentment or surprise. Then by degrees we loosed Sam and got him up. He was none the worse, but there was some damage to the long-suffering harness, and one of the shafts was broken. I am afraid we must have formed rather a sorry-looking group of unfortunates, fit food for the compassion of the wayfarer, had any chanced to pass that way—with SIEGLINDA stranded on the roadside, Simon surreptitiously chewing such grass as was within reach, for he never likes to lose any time, and Sam defiled by the mud in which he had been lying and hanging his lower lip with a

look of pain and bewilderment, while Herbert patched the harness with string and the Old Campaigner and I tried to make the shaft secure. There was much rubbing down and wiping and rearranging to do, but at last we were able to gather up our various component parts, like an engine that has been taken to pieces, and proceed upon our way.

I never like to travel through a dead level country. The horses always suffer from the monotony of a road without any rise and fall, and I am sure that some measure of undulation helps us all along. Sam had been having much too dull a time that day. He had to do something for a diversion.

But his best performances are of course at night. At a moorland camp above Crieff he had the good fortune to discover an open gate in the small hours of the morning and went casually off up a neighbouring mountain, with the admiring Simon in his wake. Herbert had no difficulty in finding them, as they were clearly visible on the sky-line, strolling onward, but he had a walk of some three miles before he came up with them and persuaded them to stop. This episode disappointed me. I like to think of the caravanner's faithful steed, always answering to his

name and sticking like a watch-dog to the van. But Sam isn't like that.

. . . After spending several weeks in the dull routine of the hayfield, where he had found little to entertain him, Sam signalized his return to a fuller and more varied life, on the second morning of our last journey, by one of the very neatest of his sporting ideas. Just as we were engaged on the final preparations for the road a small boy came running (we came to know that small boy) with the news that the big horse was loose. At the same moment a singular metallic sound, not unlike the clacking of a stick run along corrugated iron, could be heard from the stable. Then Sam emerged, smiling broadly, and wearing a bucket securely jammed on one of his fore feet, rather after the style of an extra boot. I do not know if he had intended to travel in it, but he appeared to be resigned when it was taken from him. . . .

. . . He was involved in a kicking match with a carter's mare at Dalwhinnie, but in that case it was adjudged that the honours were even. . . .

. . . In the depth of the night at Strathyre, when we were sleeping in the tent, we were awakened by a voice.

"Driver!" A pause. "Driver, are ye sleepin'?"

Herbert's reply may be said to have been in the affirmative.

"Driver!" This time in a more imperative tone. "That big horse of yours is loose and doin' damage." . . .

. . . I have never got to the bottom of the matter of Sam and the two kittens at Ballantrae. Perhaps my enquiries were rather half-hearted. But something happened in the course of the night which was not at all to his credit. I was given to understand that there were really too many kittens, however, and the stable was no proper place for them. . . .

Now that all is over Simon is enjoying cheerful days of idleness in the Bank End field. He is pretty rough and disreputable in appearance, and he has shown at times no little contempt, as becomes a traveller of experience, for the restraints of gates and fences. He came over to me this morning, as I went down the lane, in search of butterscotch. Sam is no longer with us. He is in retirement on a farm in Cumberland. All that is left of him—and my Partner has decreed that it be framed in oak and hung in the middle-room of SIEGLINDA—is a large red card bearing the words FIRST PRIZE.

CHAPTER XVI

SPECIMEN DAYS

THE journey from Coupar Angus to Dunkeld lies through the very heart of the Scottish Midlands, a glowing country in the month of June, richly wooded and fertile, with arches of honeysuckle in the hedges and a counterpane of marguerites cast every here and there in the meadows. The best thing that we saw that day was the eighty-foot beech hedge at Meikleour, and fortune was all in our favour, as it was only by taking a wrong turning that we passed that way. And then we came down into the Tay Valley—and that is the finest river of them all—and entered Dunkeld. We came to know all the four main roads that run out of Dunkeld before our journeys were over, and the camp that we occupied that night we visited twice again in the following summer. We crossed Telford's famous bridge and turned up the right bank of the Tay for a mile, by a road that was smothered in foliage till we came to the junction of the Braan Water,

where there are some open fields, a mill and a little inn. And there we found the most delightful camp in a paddock behind the mill, with towering trees on every side. Not far away was a camp of Boy Scouts, whose sentinels, rigid at their posts, had done their level best not to look interested as the caravan went by. And there were all manner of creatures in our paddock, so that we were provided with ample entertainment at our very doors.

The collection of poultry was large and various ; a pet lamb wandered about disconsolately, there were two calves, with an eye on the buckets, a variety of small dogs, and a goat. When to this assortment were added Sam and Simon, roaming about in the most jovial mood, the scene became remarkably animated. Sam very soon put his foot through a trough, and while Herbert was gently remonstrating with him one of the calves took possession of the tent. I would have gone to expel him had I not been busy protecting the raw materials for supper which I had turned out on the turf at the back of the van. But the best passages occurred between Sam and the goat. This was something quite new to Sam, and he strongly objects to innovations. Time and again he made a dash at him, the goat gaily

retreating with defiant hops and skips. He had no difficulty in keeping his distance as long as they remained in the open, but Sam manœuvred him at last into a corner formed by an out-house, with a lean-to roof, that jutted out from the barn. It seemed that all was over with the goat, but the full strategy of his campaign was only now unfolded as he sprang nimbly on to the roof and ran up it to the gutter of the barn high above. There he turned round and butted truculently. But Sam had already fled. As soon as he heard the resounding patter of small hoofs upon the corrugated iron he gave up the chase and retreated nervously. Thereafter the goat, using his roof as a sort of base of operations, made many fearless sallies into the field below. But Sam concluded that it was not as good a game as he had thought.

The old mill was remarkable for many things besides its menagerie. It was set about by a perfect jungle of little buildings and queer secluded corners, and there was a fine bathing pool in the stream, and high square columns of stacked timber and a garden full of giant sweet-peas and climbing roses.

Sam and Simon were captured at last and removed to another field for the night, and all

our various neighbours were rounded up and stowed away in their several quarters, the goat alone being left master of the field (he slept apparently where it suited him best in any one of the surrounding out-houses); and we supped outside in the calm that followed.

It was my birthday and my Partner presented me with a beautiful fish-slice, a thing that I had never owned in my life before. It has been a great comfort to me. No longer need I work away in frying-pans with inadequate knives, trying hard not to bruise or break the tender flesh of fishes. I may safely say that I have never served a damaged fillet in SIEGLINDA since that memorable day.

Let us take a day, of a very different character, from our experiences in Renfrewshire, after crossing the Clyde on our way South. This country has not been laid out with a view to caravanning. Our road lay through squalid villages, among railways and chimneys, by pinched and blackened hedges. There were some steep hills and occasional electric cars. Once we lost our way and had to turn back after climbing a long hill all in vain. And we had long delays at camping time. Nevertheless it is remarkable how agriculture, our hospitable friend, contrives

to thrive among the chimneys. Wherever the heavy hand of the mine or factory spares a few acres, farms may still be found. At last we approached the smoke-begrimed township of Dalry, set about by seared and degraded country. We had not yet found a resting-place.

There we pulled up and sent Herbert to enquire at a farm, which from the road-ward side had little promise. We were determined to go no farther if we could help it, but we did not want to spend the Sunday among the chimneys. We sat and waited, while the Primus got to work upon the tea. After a while we saw the form of Herbert disappearing over a distant hill, in search of the farmer. We had, I think, just about touched our low-water mark. It was very hot and dusty; we were thoroughly tired, and in front of us was the black country which we must traverse if this last hope failed. The horses stood in drooping posture, the sun beat down upon us, the Primus gently buzzed in the stillness—and in my sinister reflections the county of Haddington, which was our final goal, seemed very far away. The plain truth is that we were "road-sick," one and all. We had made our record week, from Dunkeld to Dalry: we were South of the Clyde, as I had vowed to be. We

had travelled 120 miles, and we had had more than enough of it.

The kettle came to the boil and tea was served: simultaneously Herbert appeared with a favourable report. That was no small relief, but we had no idea of how good a thing we had struck in the hour of our extremity. The hill was very steep, and the van had to turn back and drive up another way. We skirted round the house and buildings and past the yard and poultry run—and there we came upon our very heart's desire. It was a great stackyard, set about on three sides with vast round haystacks towering up into the blue. In the centre was a little verdant square, level as a billiard table and the short, fresh turf upon it was like a fair green carpet laid down. We drew up in the centre and shut in as we were we need no longer believe in the existence of the road, not fifty yards below us, or of the belching chimneys beyond. Gratefully, very gratefully, we took out the weary horses and tumbled the camp furniture out on to the carpet in the shade. To-morrow, we did not fail to tell each other, was Sunday.

That evening there was a long and interesting combat between Herbert and the Primus Stove. I was never able to make out which of the two

had been the aggressor, though Herbert denied that he had struck the first blow, and stoutly maintained that it had opened hostilities by spouting oil when it thought he wasn't looking. But it was a fine set-to. For over an hour we could hear all the pumpings, splutterings, flarings and hissings of the fray, while dense black fumes rolled out of the tent door and ascended to Heaven ; and more than once Herbert was forced to retire in search of fresh ammunition in the form of methylated spirits. My Partner thought we should separate them before serious damage was done, but it seemed to me better to let them fight it out : there would never be peace till we knew once for all which was the better man. Silence at last descended on the tent and Herbert, worn and blackened and grimly triumphant, appeared with the Primus in his hand, burning with an even flame submissively and without a sob.

There was a day in Galloway, from Newton Stewart to Tarff, which stands entered in my diary, without any saving clause, as "the best day of the tour." The statement is not to be taken very seriously, for I am, I know, apt to lose my head at times when I come to writing up the diary, and most of the days that I have

to describe are the best of the tour. Still it was a good day, through grand country—it was a mighty long way, twenty-four miles—it was perfect weather: and late in the evening we drove up a hill in the face of the setting sun into a stackyard that was filled with a warm haze of tingling gold. We were then just entering upon the finest stretch of road surface, in our experience, in the whole of Scotland (and I hope that the road-surveyor of the district will allow me to present to him my respectful compliments), which continues without blemish to Dumfries. I had been cutting up and mixing materials for a stew all day as we went along, and now it only remained to put on the pot.

The country that we had traversed was remarkable for the variety of its forest trees. I amused myself by counting them in one wood that we passed through and reached a total of twenty-five. And there were many leafy places where the branches, low-hanging, scampered noisily along the roof, as we pushed by, or whipped the windows startlingly.

That was a tobacco farmer, for there is more scope in Scottish agriculture than you might believe before you come to search it out. It looked a strong crop, and the farmer harvested it,

as I was pleased to observe, by chopping it off crisply with a tiny axe. There was a touch of frost that night and a white mist in the morning, and the very air seemed to be faintly tinged with blue, as it thinned out and vanished in the heat of the sun.

And finally let us pick out a day of minor adventures. We were camped just South of Edinburgh and the Old Campaigner was with us. Both he and my Partner had to go into town upon various affairs and we made an appointment to assemble at the ferry beneath the Forth Bridge (if they did not overtake me previously on the Queensferry Road), not later than 3 p.m. I set to work to skirt the City and if possible to avoid the cars. And in this I was so far very successful, having made out a route of curious little zigzags. But when I reached Corstorphine I found myself up against so steep a ridge, which shut me off from the Queensferry Road, that I had to tack away to the West for several miles and finally approach the ferry from the opposite direction. We had sundry delays at a saddler's and elsewhere, and we had a feast of incidents. First of all there was a cart, whose driver, having been overcome by strong beverages, was gently sleeping to the public danger, while his conveyance blocked the

road ; and as soon as we had disposed of him we encountered the runaway.

That was a most impressive sight. A powerful young Clydesdale horse at full gallop, drawing an iron agricultural roller, which bumped about with a hideous banging, clattering and thumping, bore down upon us. We happened to be waiting at the moment just at the top of the perilous hill that leads down to the ferry, and it was not at all desirable that either the roller or SIEGLINDA—if our horses took fright—should set off in that direction. Herbert took the horses' heads while I barred the way, standing in the centre of the road and playing to the best of my ability the part of a windmill. I failed to stop the runaway, but at least I turned him. He went thundering off up a lane to the right, and the turmoil died away in a cloud of dust. The back brake brought us comfortably down the hill, and we reached the ferry to find my Partner gazing with longing eyes in the opposite direction. As neither she nor the Old Campaigner had overtaken us on their way from Edinburgh and as we were already long after our appointed time, they had become rather anxious about our movements. The Old Campaigner, she told me, had departed in a taxi to search the whole of the surrounding neighbour-

hood. That, however, did not disturb me. The Old Campaigner is never quite so happy as when he is searching for a caravan in an unknown country, and though he did not turn up for fully an hour there was no doubt that he had had a thoroughly good time.

Our next encounter was with the Commodore. (I don't know at all what his rank and status may have been, but at least he wore a white-peaked cap and he appeared to be in charge of the ferry traffic.) He told us that there was no boat till the following morning, as the tide was wrong, and also that SIEGLINDA was too big to get on to the boat that went then. His best boat, he said, much his best boat was at present laid up. He was an excellent fellow, the Commodore, but rather too short in the leg for the work of measuring vehicles. When I asked him to pace the length of SIEGLINDA he took eight very solemn little steps and pronounced her twenty-four feet long. Then I tried, and covered the distance in five steps. But he was not at all convinced. She was twenty-four feet, he maintained, if she was an inch. At last he sent for a foot-rule and we arrived at a more moderate estimate. He then concluded that she would go on his boat, if duly presented at 9 a.m. on the following day.

Before we had time to consider camping-ground for the night another complication arose. I had the ill-luck—though it is a thing that may happen to anyone—to fall into the hands of the police. I might go so far as to say that I was captured by a Posse of police, if that is the right word, for there were no less than five of them. I have never been able to make out what they were doing there, but I think they must have turned their attention to me, because they had been baulked of other prey. They were no ordinary police. They were all beautifully dressed and lavishly decorated with braid and medals, and in the course of the court-martial that followed (for I was subjected to a searching enquiry) they addressed each other as "Sergeant" and "Inspector" and so on, which really added a distinguished air to the proceedings. My crime was connected with the proper display of my name and address on the body of the van, as by law prescribed, in letters of not less than an inch in height. My defence was that this was a mere technicality, but the affair was assuming most threatening proportions before I knew where I was. My name, state, profession, age, address, the colour of my eyes and many other rather intimate details (I thought) having been taken

down in a note-book, the committee retired to consider its next move. The charge, however, somehow fell to the ground. Perhaps the real criminal had turned up in the meantime. I am convinced that so strong a body of police had not been drafted—I believe that is the expression—into Queensferry without some important capture in prospect. I was merely a passing diversion.

We camped at last right under the Forth Bridge, in a neat little corner off the road, and at intervals throughout the night, away up in the darkness overhead, we could hear the thunder of the passing trains.

CHAPTER XVII

ALL SORTS OF CARAVANNERS

I HAD had a wire from the Old Campaigner, which I found fortuitously at a village post office. He said that he would reach the Caledonian Hotel, Edinburgh, late on Thursday evening and was coming to find us. He only knew that we were somewhere between Moffat and Inverness and would be glad of instructions. I sent him a reply to the hotel which made his way easy for him: "Take a taxi go south by road to penicuik between fourth and fifth milestones biggar road strikes off to right don't take it but 973 yards further on lane strikes off at acute angle to left go 200 yards down this lane turn to left and look about." By following these directions the Old Campaigner stepped out of his taxi into his tent about 10 p.m. pleasantly surprised to find himself there. He had come for a week-end which became a week, then a fortnight and finally three weeks, and had he not had the misfortune to run into telegrams, that could not be ignored, in Easter Ross he might have completed the tour.

The Old Campaigner has a wonderful power of shedding his everyday self as he comes in sight of a caravan, a tent, a hut or a canoe, or any of the other means of escape from the affairs of life which he and I have fashioned for ourselves in the last twenty years. There is no one who knows better how to chop off short every one of his normal activities and run away—a fugitive from commerce. His reincarnation as a caravanner is complete. You cannot tempt him with newspapers or interest him in the movements of markets. And it is generally very difficult to trace him, for he is in no hurry to call at the post office for urgent telegrams. To see him at his City desk, thoughtfully controlling vast interests, or strolling about on 'Change with his hat pushed back from a puckered brow you would never dream of the metamorphosis that can be wrought in him by the immediate prospect of sleeping under canvas. Perhaps it is partly the influence of his clothes. He is always faultlessly dressed in normal life. But as soon as he rids himself of his collar and tie and gets into a pair of blue shorts and a sweater, as soon as you find him adapting a piece of window cord to act as a garter or using a bootlace in place of a button, I tell you candidly it is no use coming to him for

advice about investments. Very often he arrives without clothes and pillages my wardrobe. These are the occasions of headlong and unthinking flight, when he has suddenly found the way open before him and it has occurred to his mind that there is a caravan somewhere on the road. He has of course great qualities as a caravanner, not least of them that enormous willingness to do anything that is wanted at a moment's notice, and that eagerness to embrace adventure of all sorts, without which our way of travel would surely lose its savour. And he always has the time of his life.

The Old Campaigner has a passion for wayside competitions and tests of efficiency. He is always willing to pit himself against anyone at anything. If he is walking on a moor he is ready to back himself for any amount to be the first of the party to find white heather. He loves to roll stones down steep hills—and see if his goes farther than yours. He is an adept in racing two bits of stick down a stream and pelting them with clods to urge them on. There is a familiar motor sign—a little hollow triangle at the top of a stick—which has given him new openings. And more than once the caravan has had to wait while he and I have finished a bout of chucking stones

through the aperture from a distance of twenty feet. (You are allowed twelve stones and you get a penny a time for each one that goes through.)

On the whole I hold my own with him, though he has the better of me sometimes in skipping flat pebbles over the surface of a lake. But there was one occasion when I was routed. We were jumping a broad ditch in the dark on a cross-country walk. I am a far better jumper than he is: I won a medal for jumping at school: I had it on my watch-chain at the time. However, he cleared it somehow and I came a fearful cropper. He pulled me tenderly out of the mud, and as soon as I had reached the bank,

"Give me that medal," he said sternly. And I felt that the claim was just. I should not wonder if he has it still, for I handed it over without a word.

He had been with us for a week on the march to John o' Groats and had helped to pilot SIEGLINDA up Borgie Brae, for he has a way of turning up when there is a big thing on. But I think the happiest moments that he spent upon the journey were at our camp in the Tummel Valley, which offered him special facilities for his favourite sport of tubbing in the open air. For some reason he despises a tub inside a tent, and if there are no

bathing opportunities to be had—and in that matter he is not hard to please, for he is quite prepared to wallow in any little stream—he insists on getting the rubber bath out into the sunshine, or the rain, pitching it in the lee of the tent and there—at some risk from the eye of the passer-by—freely disporting himself in the water. But at this camp he soon discovered a most convenient little mill-race, about six inches deep and a couple of feet broad, with a smooth and mossy bottom. The current was so strong that it was only necessary to lie down and let go to be borne along, hallooing joyously. I did not myself take part in this exercise, but I heartily appreciated it from the door of the van. The Old Campaigner was very late for breakfast, but he had the time of his life.

The Journalist and his Wife also join us sometimes. It is his custom to skirmish along the high ground with a camera, when we are on the march, considerably in advance of the main party. Whenever he has secured a commanding position (and he is extremely fastidious: he must have the van at an angle that suits him, and a mere telegraph pole is enough to vitiate his background)—whenever the moment has arrived we are held up by wild signals from the ridge above and must

throw ourselves at once into an attitude. And it must be said that in the earnest pursuit of his art he takes a ghoulish pleasure in our misfortunes. If he can catch us stuck in a waterway or in any other predicament he gloats upon the spectacle through his lens.

The Journalist's Wife is a born caravanner. All the necessary household arts are rooted in her; she has great gifts in dealing with utensils. It was she who invented the method of cleaning the milk bottle—till it glitters—with sand; and she has contributed several new items to our arsenal—the most notable among them, perhaps, the asbestos platter, by the use of which a pot can be kept equably at the boil. She is deft in mixing mustard, and has real insight into the question of straining coffee. More than once I have thought (though I may have been wrong) that I have caught her casting envious eyes into my kitchen.

The Journalist on the other hand is a pure passenger, and has the three virtues of the passenger—(1) he is always happy, (2) he does not leave his belongings lying about the van, and (3) he is never in the way.

About two miles above Grantown we found quarters for the night on a small holding, shut

off from the road by trees. Above us on a little knoll among the heather was another caravan, flanked by a long "Alpine" tent—a very charming little encampment which had quite a settled and permanent appearance about it. As soon as I could safely leave the supper I went over to call. It was the daintiest little waggon, very narrow and very high off the ground, brightly painted and covered with a sun-cloth and bearing the inscription HIGHLAND BIBLE CARRIAGE over the door. It did not perhaps look to me a very practical traveller, but its little green shutters and above all its window-boxes full of blooms went straight to my heart. It was not till the following day that we encountered its owner. He was an aged Highlander, of enormous stature, who had been camped throughout the summer in his present quarters, and who told me that he had been caravanning off and on for twenty or thirty years. He had built his waggon himself and also his tent, which was an extremely solid and finished piece of work, and he had a good deal to tell me about his experiences of Highland roads, and especially of a winter journey when he had been completely snowed up and unable to move for several weeks. The following day was Sunday, and we went to his

service in a dark little cowshed, where the congregation packed themselves in as best they could among sacks of artificial manure and stored implements. I think he could hardly have had a more impressive pulpit, standing as he did in the failing light of the doorway, with his tall figure thrown up against the distant view of the mountains behind. It was almost dark by the time his long discourse came to an end, and we had to grope our way out into the air. After that he came to spend the evening with us and tell us more of his reminiscences. And of course we discussed stoves, a point on which he was particularly sound.

It was the Glasgow Fair week when we reached Callander, so that we had some neighbours in our camping-ground, a mile out of the town. Three other caravans appeared in the course of the two days. One of these was the real thing—a party of indiscriminate traders, ready to deal in baskets, tin cans or horses, or to take their place in a travelling show if necessary. Theirs was the true patriarchal method. It was fine to see them draw in and instantly, even before the horse was out, produce a large arm-chair in which the father of the tribe took up his position with his pipe, directing the operations of the women and

children, with an occasional languid wave of the arm. I pointed out this example of how the thing should really be done to my Partner, but she did not quite agree with me. We paid a long call on them in the evening and inspected their caravan's interior.

Another party was conducted by a carter, who had borrowed a van from his employer and was out for a week's tour with his wife and family. There was an admirable efficiency about this expedition, though the van itself was of a heavy, lumbering type. But I came away with the impression that, in contra-distinction to our other friends, in this case it was the wife and family who were really enjoying themselves, while the burden rested heavily upon the man himself.

Of the third party I cannot speak without a certain resentment and a certain deep misgiving for the reputation of our craft. They had a large van and it was a huge party—eight in all, and all of them men. And they were of the sort which loves (I have never been able to understand it) to decorate the caravan with such announcements as will attract the attention and the scorn of the passer-by. They always carry gramophones, and they sing loudly in the small hours of the morning. And after they are gone the

whole of the surrounding country is adorned with reminiscences of their visit in the form of assorted refuse. This particular van bore many interesting legends in large type. WE ARE EIGHT : LOOKING FOR BAIT, for instance. (I don't undertake to translate. I am only reporting faithfully.) And—THE ABODE OF LOVE. And—INNOCENTS ABROAD. And—THE BEASTS ARE FED AT ONE-THIRTY.

Really the silent panels of SIEGLINDA began to look very plain and uninteresting to us. We were led to wonder whether we could not do something to brighten up her appearance. One of the Eight came over in the morning to inspect us, while we were both inside and Herbert was at work on the brake-blocks. He subjected us to a pretty careful study without saying a word and made no pronouncement till he had quite made up his mind. And then :

" She won't stand much ! " he remarked sagely, and turned away shaking his head. And I am sorry to say that Herbert nearly had hysterics.

They departed that afternoon and the place seemed very quiet without them, as they say when the children have gone back to school.

In dealing with caravanners that I have met I cannot leave out Mrs. Goodenough, although

she belongs to an earlier period. She used to travel with her large, performing family, giving entertainments in the villages, and she always looked in to see me when she passed my way. I had a special regard for her on account of the perfect harmony that existed between herself and her dwelling. Away from her caravan she was like a fish out of water : she had lived all her life in it and brought up her family there. And she told me that she could never feel at home in a house. She was always " restless like after the first few minutes and wanted to get near the winder. Rooms is so big and lonely."

" But wouldn't a house be more comfortable in the winter ? " I would say.

" No," she would reply. " I never can feel as if I were gettin' *warmed through* in an 'ouse."

" But are you never afraid of being blown over on stormy nights ? "

The old lady laughed with much enjoyment. " They do say," she remarked, " that mother never looks to be snug in bed till the van begins to rock a bit."

CHAPTER XVIII

MEMORABLE CAMPS

It was on the day on which we left Inverness on our march to the West that we came into the comely valley of the Conon Water. I look back upon this district as a place apart. The other fine neighbourhoods that we visited were all well known to us by name and by repute before we reached them. But I have a pleasant feeling that we found the Conon Valley for ourselves. Its beautiful and kindly scenery, its great sweeping river, its comfortable farms, and above all its unmatched inhabitants were ours by right of discovery. That was indeed our Happy Valley, and if ever again I drive SIEGLINDA across the Grampians it is safe to say that one of my first inducements will be to seek out again the friends that we left behind us there. For after crossing the river below Contin and completing a day of twenty-four miles, we dropped into the greatest camp, all things considered, of all our long experience. We might easily have driven on.

There was nothing about that farm, as seen from the roadway, to single it out from its fellows. But when we had been warmly welcomed by the farmer and instructed to turn down a narrow lane below the garden we came out suddenly upon a little open space beside the river, completely screened from the road, with a ravishing view of the mountains. We drew the van up on a level stretch of turf in the very heart of acres of flaming broom and pitched the tents in a small hollow down below. Sam and Simon wandered off and waded out into the river to drink, thus adding the one needed touch of special interest in the foreground that made the picture from our windows quite complete.

No one appreciated this memorable camp more than Herbert. He had come to so good an understanding with the farm hands that his horses were royally treated both in the stable and out at grass. He had dairy supplies of all sorts to draw upon ; he borrowed all manner of odds and ends as he required them, and we found him on the Sunday, when cleaning was in hand, carrying out buckets of boiling water from the kitchen—which may surely be described as the very height of luxury. For my own part I secured a wealth of vegetables and a fine choice

of flowers. After much consideration we let the hawthorn have its way inside the van, for I think she looks her best in hawthorn.

We further explored our Happy Valley on the Sunday and went to the most inviting old church upon an island that was approached by no road or path or other sort of track, but appeared to grow simply out of the grass like a tree. And we spent a very sociable afternoon and evening with our host and hostess, who, after we had taken tea with them, came back with us to the van, when I had to get my roast into the oven.

There was a little lane two miles from Beauly, which my Partner had marked down upon our outward journey as a likely camping-ground, where we found a glorious resting-place on our return. It was not a convenient spot to camp, for the farm was some way off down the hill and water was far to carry, but it was perfect in itself. There were great trees on either hand, a high bank to the left and a broad view to the right, and the whole place was embowered in flowering broom. Sunshine filtered down upon us and spread a wide curtain of gold upon the bank above. I do not think SIEGLINDA ever had so fair a garden. . . .

In a splendid neighbourhood below Strathyre

we camped in a field at the side of the road with an amphitheatre of wood about us. Herbert cautiously manipulated the van through the narrowest gate that she has ever traversed. He had about two inches on either side to come and go upon, but we touched nothing. It is probable that he would not have attempted it had not the farmer maintained with scorn that it was manifestly impossible. SIEGLINDA looked altogether out of proportion on the farther side, enjoying something of the comic success of the conjuring trick by which one passes an egg into a bottle. . . .

At Comrie we fell upon a stackyard of fine properties, not the least of them the hidden stream which flowed just past the van, down a little narrow gorge entirely closed up with trees. It was a warm day and more than once we descended into this chasm and bathed in a deep pool, arched closely in with branches and dappled over with rare spots of sunshine. . . .

I dare say there is no finer camp in the Lowlands of Scotland than our last one at the foot of St. Mary's Loch ; and we reached it in the finest week of all the year, at the moment of its climax ; for the bracken that spreads far and wide upon the rounded hills had turned to its warm autumn

tints and the colouring of the landscape, steeped in sunshine, was magnificent. Bracken, we concluded, would be the very making of Dalwhinnie, of Loch Shin, of other dreary places in the North, which fail of their effect by their single allegiance to the heather. . . .

But there is no end to my memorable camps, and something I must say of the special virtues of stackyards. It was in the last of our journeys that we came to recognize that had the institution of the stackyard been invented for the benefit of the caravanner it could hardly have been better done. For a stackyard is bound to be easily accessible with a good road in and a wide gate. It is always hard in the surface and you have no fear of sinking. It is near the steading and thus most handy for supplies, and yet it is quiet and secluded enough. Stacks are themselves delightful neighbours, especially the bonny round stacks of Southern Scotland, and often they form an alluring pattern, pleasant shapes and combinations, open spaces and narrow thoroughfares. For if, when we are caravanning, we are in some measure as children who are playing at house on the grand scale—and of course we are: that is part of the secret fascination—it follows that the game is much enriched if the house be set in

a street, in a village with other (make-believe) houses about it. And this is just what happens. You may draw in to the most enchanting little corners and interstices. You have immense variety in the choice of your site. Again the towering stacks will always give you shade in summer weather and incomparable shelter in storms of wind and rain. And you may become when you are among them the finest epicures in the matter of your view, so pitching the van as to conceal what is unlovely and open up what you wish to look upon.

One of the best rewards that we won by making our last journey in September was in our stack-yards. For earlier in the year they are bereft of all their chief and special qualities. In June or July they are for the most part almost empty, peopled only by a few dark old-season stacks, which have lost their warmth and freshness. The grass grows long in them for lack of traffic, and they are deserted, a mere stagnant back-water in the life of the farm. But in September they are in full tide of accumulation. Every day new, glowing, golden stacks are going up. All the jolliest operations of the farming year are going on there: new peaks and summits are being reached; carts are moving to and fro.

On a fine evening you will see the farmer's daughter coming from the house with her great baskets of meat and drink, that all the hands may sup without delay and not a moment may be lost. Possibly after dark a vast uncouth thrashing mill may come snorting in, grinding and swaying over the uneven ground, manœuvring clumsily by lantern light. All the life of the farm is concentrated there. You will make more friends in a single evening in the stackyard than you would in a week if you were camped in a distant field.

It is not always the most formal and correct of stackyards that attract me most. Many of them are rambling and unkempt, with trees about them and an occasional neglected implement—by means of which Herbert saves himself a tent-peg. Docks and nettles may grow in them, but these are not without their value, as they have great capacity for accepting and concealing what is cast away. Jessica—one of the members of the underworld—can be emptied into them without compunction. Some have those fine, new-fangled iron frames, as stack-bases, on which you may admirably spread out wet things to dry. And all have—when the crop is in—the same clean, crisp, gold and green decoration, the same

warm welcome and invitation, the same fresh and kindly fragrance.

Some of them also have wasps' nests. If that great stackyard at Dalry had a fault—and I should grieve to admit it—it was that on the Sunday, a still, blue, heavenly day, we were actively employed for several hours keeping out a wasp invasion, and both of us were stung. But there is no rose, I am told, without its thorn.

CHAPTER XIX

OUR MARCH TO THE WEST

Soon after we left our Happy Valley we came out upon the open moor. We made a twenty-four-mile journey on the Monday, on a road that was much better than we expected, and had to content ourselves with what my Partner calls a " corrugated camp," such as we had met with more than once in Sutherland, at Overscaig, Altnaharra and elsewhere. In these remote districts, I am sorry to say, corrugated iron is much in vogue, greatly to the detriment of the scenery, and any shed, stable, garage or other building that one may find at the roadside is generally constructed of it. These buildings have two other characteristics. They always have a good hard level space in front of them and they are always locked and deserted. So at Achnasheen we stopped beside a sheltering shed, which rang all night to the assault of the rain. But with the morning the sun came out again and we had a capital day for our heavy march over to Loch Maree. The road is not very steep nor the hill

very long going West, but the surface became loose and gravelly and we had two difficult encounters with motors in narrow places. At the top we came upon the noble view down Glen Docherty. Freely do I give it pride of place along with the Queen's View above Loch Tummel and that of the Kyle of Tongue. There are plenty of views among our memories that jostle each other for inclusion in the second rank. But these three occupy the first. Loch Maree, misty and seductive in the tempered sunlight, wandered away into the dim distance, the many islands showing up sharp against the silvery background, and the commanding outline of Slioch rising sheer out of the water on the right. No Highland view can take first rank without a really good mountain in it, but Slioch is overpowering and precipitous.

Indeed there is no loch that we have seen like Loch Maree. It is not wholly wild and lonely and remote. The grandeur of the Northern side is in most happy contrast to the gentle beauty of the birch-woods and the mossy glens that alternate with the heather to the South, and the wooded islands scattered everywhere would seem, in this contest of two types of Highland beauty, to throw in their lot with the Southern side.

The new back brake was tested to the full on the long descent of Glen Docherty, but it held us admirably, and just South of Kinlochewe we camped on a farm road about a mile above the loch. The hotel proprietor, who appeared to have all the resources of the neighbourhood in his own hands, greeted us most hospitably, and through his help Herbert was able to bring in all the fresh eggs, as far as we could make out, that had been laid in that part of Ross-shire in the last two days.

On the Tuesday we proceeded ten miles down the loch over a most deplorable road and found a capital camping-ground on an open space beside a stream, not far from the Loch Maree Hotel. That was a day of perfect weather and wonderful views and we spent the afternoon in a variety of domestic jobs, the Official Photographer carrying out important toning and fixing operations on the bank behind the van.

There was again a tremendous downpour in the night, but according to its admirable custom the weather cleared up as soon as it saw the horses coming and we had a brilliant day for our final march to the West. After our many failures we had come to regard our arrival on the West Coast as an event well worthy to rank with our

arrival at John o' Groat's, and it must be said that although we had now only eleven miles to travel they were lavishly beset with difficulties. The road was thoroughly bad and the hills were heavy, becoming, as they always do, more and more vicious and impracticable as we approached our goal. After the long pull up from the loch, with a glorious view unfolding behind us, we reached a barren level tract of stunted heather, stones and dark still pools; and here a tinker's cart hove in sight and drew off on to an open space beside a corrugated iron shed to let us pass, for there was no room to spare. We were much delighted as we came near to recognize our friend, the tinker of Lairg, on tour with all his family. Several of them were walking in a straggling line behind; he and his wife lay at full length upon the heaped-up tent and impedimenta, and I do not know how many of the smaller members of the clan had been packed in along with the other luggage, but during our conversation with him heads kept popping up here and there in the most unlikely places. When I speak of a tinker's cart I fear I may give you a wrong impression of that great structure. There was nothing mean or meagre about its proportions and its breadth at the top, when all

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was loaded up, was quite as great as that of SIEGLINDA.

The tinker, who is a great amateur of rustic beauty, assured us—I am afraid that I must not reproduce his conversation *verbatim* which is perhaps a pity—that we were now within a mile of what he considered the blankest, blankest piece of scenery in the North of Scotland: learning that we were likely to catch him up again on our return, we parted, the various small heads disappearing beneath the surface as soon as they had grinned a last good-bye at the retreating "gorryvon."

And so we came down into Gairloch, but we had two villainous little hills to negotiate in the last half mile of our journey, and both brakes were on to the full when we came to rest in an open space near the hotel. There was a little sandy bay on the far side of the road, great mountains shut us in on the landward side, richly clothed with spruce and birch, and I do not think that in the whole of Scotland there can be any spot more perfect. I note that the inhabitants all speak of Gairloch in caressing tones, as if it were a small child or a pet animal, dwelling lovingly upon its syllables and giving to the name a gentle charm; and we were fortu-

nate, doubly fortunate in the light of the storms that followed, in reaching it on a golden afternoon of still airs and clear sunshine.

We made no doubt about it that we had reached the coast at last for we went down to bathe, as soon as the horses were unyoked, and later in the evening Sam and Simon gave to the assembled inhabitants a gay half-hour of lively entertainment, when Herbert took them also down to have their evening's dip. Very fine they looked from the road above as they sported and curvetted on the sands, for they needed much persuasion to take the plunge. Simon specially funked the thing abominably, and had to be hurled in backwards at the last. And in order that the necessary comic relief should not be absent, Sam, when belly-deep in the waves with Herbert on his back, suddenly bucked and threw his rider, to every one's delight.

It chanced that as we drew in to camp we had met a large and well-attended funeral procession, and this had had the effect of advertising our presence far and wide, so that Sam and Simon did not lack of a good audience for their performance, both that afternoon and, when it was repeated by request, on the following morning. This accounted also for our many visitors.

"Weel," said the old minister, as I helped him down the steps, "I can only say that it's an *awfu'* way tae see the country." And I was very grateful to him for this happy variant upon the phrase that haunts me wherever I go. I understand that by "awful" he meant to express all that is charming, even as I have heard a Scotchman speak of a "horrid bonny lassie." And I was pleased to find that in this favoured spot of Gairloch they use, as is most meet, a phraseology of their own.

"Yes," said I. "It is indeed Awful."

The minister walked round the van, weighing its substance with his eye. Then he turned again to me.

"Where was it erected?" he asked. And that also pleased me, for well I knew that any one out of Gairloch would have asked—all unconscious of the platitude—where it was built. Not that it ever was erected, for when it was a question of putting it together its body descended from above.

And while we were waiting for a promised caller from over the hill who was long overdue, my friend added one more quaint phrase to his examples of the Gairloch tongue. He looked wistfully up the road and—"Will he come on his foot?" he asked.

You see, Gairloch is different from other places. The manageress of the hotel sent round a daily paper with offers of her services and insisted on my inspecting all her principal rooms. Other inhabitants had to show us their gardens, their kitchens, their view from the upstairs windows. At the little pier near the post office the whole routine of the small traffic that comes and goes had to be explained. I think they were all anxious to show that they were not unworthy of living in Gairloch, that they recognized their favoured position and meant to play up to the best of their powers. And thus we found it impossible to make a start before the afternoon. We were of course to return to Achnasheen by the road by which we had come. Even if we had had any intention of going on up the coast I think we should have been deterred by an ugly story that reached us of a gang of men who had been sent up there to wait at a given point and lend their services in the work of digging motors out of the sand. We had plenty of bad hills before us as it was: I had been guilty the day before of filling the oil-tanks too full. That is a matter which depends upon the country that you are travelling in. If your oil-tank is ten inches across and the caravan is descending a hill of one in ten it is

manifest that the far end of the tank will be tilted up one inch and allowance must be made for that.

After lunch we got the horses in and were escorted to the confines of the village by many of our hosts. We passed again through Flowerdale —a name that does not seem to belong to this neighbourhood at all, but rather to some sheltered English valley—and into the midst of that blankest scenery which had so uplifted the heart of our friend the tinker. It is a magnificent wooded glen by which one climbs out on to the heights. But there is, from this side, no distant view of Gairloch. It lies round the corner, tucked away in its own little bay, a treasure that must be closely sought for. It would be out of keeping with its modest beauty that it should be peered down upon by curious eyes from distant places.

CHAPTER XX

ROAD-GAMES, SHORT CUTS AND PENNY DIP

For my part the weary pass over the Grampians by Dalnaspidal is no more than a necessary grind that must be worked through to reach the noble country beyond. And as I walked on mile after mile I fell to playing Road-games to pass the time. I have walked well over a thousand miles of Scotch roads in the course of my journeys, and it is rarely that I need to look for entertainment to beguile the way, beyond the pleasures of common observation. But there are methods of entertaining oneself, as one trudges along, which, without too much engrossing one's attention, provide a pleasant undercurrent of sportive calculation. These things belong to the special frame of mind that is the gift of the wayfarer, a sort of contented monotony—a passive sense of satisfaction in things as they are. When Stevenson was making his inland voyage he tells us that he used to spend hours on end counting the strokes of his paddle and forgetting the hundreds.

On any main road you may confidently expect to find all the instruments and appliances that are needed for these sports. You have your watch, the telegraph poles, the milestones. The telegraph poles are numbered—though I have even met with travellers so unobservant and uneducated as not to be aware of it. Your first business of course is to get the distance between poles. As they vary greatly with the bend of the road you will find that you must pace perhaps half a dozen different intervals before you arrive at a fair average. From that you go on to find how many poles there are to the mile, and by taking the number of one of them you will find from which post office they are counting (though that is perhaps a side issue). Then you may go on, with this guide to help you, to the game of Hunt-the-Milestone, which is, I think, one of the best in the repertory. Taking the number of the pole nearest the milestone that you are at, you will know, if your calculations have not led you astray, just where to find the next. You can even locate it afar off by following with your eye the dwindling poles that reach away into the distance in front. You can turn to your Partner and say :

" Do you see that old spruce tree at the bend of the road ? "

"Yes," she will reply. "What about it?"

"The seventeenth milestone is just at the foot of it."

You will be in a state of some excitement as you draw near and have to substantiate your prophecy. And of course you can have a competition with the Old Campaigner. . . . But you must not forget the allowances and adjustments that are called for by the uncertain behaviour of your poles. It is no affair of rule of thumb. They will suddenly bunch close together at a sharp turning. They may even desert the road and cut across the hill.

I have at times played this game when sitting inside the van, but there it is not so easy to get a sure basis of calculation, though it may be done either by pacing the intervals vicariously by means of Simon's steps, or by taking the number of the uprights in a roadside fence and assuming their distance apart.

There are all sorts of combinations open to you as soon as you introduce a new element in the second hand of your watch. You will train yourself to walk a mile in a certain length of time, and if you have any real aptitude for the thing you should soon be able to set out confidently to do your next mile in 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13 or 12

minutes at will, and be within a few seconds of your goal. If you have no milestones you use telegraph poles, and it is only on a road that is bereft of both that you will fail for lack of material.

You may generally reckon that the van is taking seventeen minutes to the mile, unless it is a particularly easy road, and if it be open country and you can see her far behind it is a pleasant exercise to discover the exact extent of your lead by timing her past two given points and pacing the space between as you go on. When she is very far behind you can most easily pick her up by observing the shadow of a roadside tree as it crosses the white expanse of roof. And when you are satisfied that you have a full ten minutes in hand you may sit down and smoke a pipe. Another field of endeavour is opened up by trying how nearly you can pace a mile in 1760 steps. I made my record on that road up the Garry by doing two miles—and that without any dishonest tempering of my paces when the milestone hove in sight—in 1743 and 1769. I never hope to improve on that, as I take it to mean that my step is within one-fifth of an inch of the standard. I think I should like to arrange a match with my friend the Commodore, if he ever leaves his duties at the ferry.

There is yet another method of progression that you may indulge in when you are tired and there is nothing to call for notice in the view. By walking at the back of the crutch and laying both your hands upon it you may, if you will, travel for a mile at a time with your eyes shut. To that it may, reasonably perhaps, be objected that you do not *want* to travel with your eyes shut, and can think of nothing to be gained by so doing. But if there *were* mice on the back of the White Knight's horse he didn't choose to have them running about, you will remember. And if you *do* want to walk with your eyes shut—if you happen to be one of the people who do—I should like to show you that this is the way to do it. Indeed I can think of no other way to do it with any degree of comfort, with any sense of security from collision, with any real freedom from the jibes of those who pass that way. And before you dismiss it as a futile sensation, may I not ask if you have ever tried ? For my part it is my ambition to fall if possible into a perambulatory slumber. I have been told that French soldiers sleep on the march. But I have never brought it off as yet.

Another great diversion of the road is provided by short cuts. I adopt a reckless forward policy

in this matter, and no number of rank failures can ever convince me that I will not score the next time. I suppose the truth is that if a short cut is good enough, if it really pays, it is bound to have been discovered by those who are more familiar with the road than I: and that consequently if there is no path at all nor trace of passing feet, there will be nothing gained by attempting it. But I am quite sure that I shall score heavily some day and emerge upon the road, far in advance of the van, to fling myself down by the wayside and await it at my ease. I have never had a great success in all the long history of my short cuts. At Wick I traversed half a mile of moor and had to retrace my steps while the van rolled away at a sharp angle. Near Forsinard I found I had two streams to ford: not far from Ballater I was completely entangled in a morass: and once beside Pitlochry I was so far divorced from the road that I must pass through private grounds, cross lawns, climb walls and force hedges before I at last came up with the main party and found them patiently awaiting me. I am very fond of taking to the railway, but I never score much even there. The last time I walked between four and five miles along the sleepers (which are always placed six inches too close together for

one's stride) with the caravan in view all the way and a deep river between, and came out upon the road at last—a dead heat.

My Partner always accepts it as sufficient explanation when I am late or when I have been lost or left behind—that I was taking a short cut. And she tells me when I total up my mileage in the evening not to forget to add them in.

Penny Dip has always held its own as the leading diversion of the crew of SIEGLINDA, though caravanning does not for a moment claim a monopoly of it. The last game that I played was with the Old Campaigner—while we waited for his train on the platform at Strathpeffer.

There are people who will disparage anything and the Penny Dip player cannot always hope to be in sympathy with his spectators. As the game proceeded we were subjected to the contemptuous scrutiny of a certain grim old woman, who regarded us in pained surprise, quite as though we had been engaged in some trivial and childish pursuit, such as riding upon a walking-stick. The Old Campaigner and I were forced to conclude that even now, even in Strathpeffer, the King of Games was much misunderstood. It is true that—in the crude and elementary form of Pitch-and-Toss—it has always enjoyed a certain

vogue in the slums, but that is only proof of its universal and widely human appeal. There is nothing exclusive about it. As the simplest and most direct form of sportive competition it has been to us a lifelong companion that can never pall by reason of its infinite variety.

Penny Dip is at once a game of skill and a game of chance. It is both an indoor and an outdoor game. It may entail a fair amount of exercise ; or it may be played in a sedentary position ; or it may be played in bed. It may be played alone as a test of hand and eye. It may be played as a duel or a foursome, a match, a bonspiel, a gymkhana or a tournament. Sometimes it is all over in five minutes : once long ago, when the Old Campaigner and I were playing a thousand up, the contest lasted for nearly seven months. It requires no paraphernalia, no preparation of ground or course. No one who has in his pocket the price of a night's lodging can find himself without the necessary implements. It may be played by anyone anywhere and at any time.

I have no intention of giving here in detail the rules of Penny Dip, for I am afraid they will be quite out of date before they reach the reader. They are always subject to drastic and violent revision, by the loser, at the conclusion of every

game. But I would like to indicate some of its many subdivisions and to show how, by adopting some of the finer features of quoits, curling, bowls and putting, it has a just claim to be regarded as the Universal Pastime. In certain forms it will also be found to be related to a long-forgotten game of one's childhood, whose memory one loves to treasure on account of the striking beauty of its name—" Squales."

It is as quoits pure and simple that the game fulfils its highest service to the race, as an ever-present stand-by for odd moments, for unexpected predicaments, for all periods of waiting, of incarceration, of enforced inactivity. As a filler-up of gaps and intervals, as a bridger-over of hiatuses it stands alone, always ready to occupy the dreary half-hour with interest and activity. It comes to the rescue when you have missed your train, on long afternoons on board ship, or in a hayshed on a moorland farm when the guns have been imprisoned by a thunderstorm. If lunch is half an hour later than you expected, if one member of the party has been delayed and fails to turn up, whenever you are waiting (as all of us so often do) for someone to come out or come in, to come down or to come back, there is occasion for Penny Dip. So long as there are

two or more of you together you need have no wasted minutes.

I have known it more than once save an unsuccessful picnic which was tottering to failure. A garden party of the most discordant elements, dependent solely upon this device in the hands of an enthusiast, may be worked up into scenes of hilarious geniality. For the thing rests upon no unstable foundation, upon no other indeed than the strong inherent desire—common to all families of the human race—to throw something at a mark. And, encircled by a curved forefinger and swung freely from the shoulder, what could be more pleasing in its flight than a penny?

It is a great game of skill. Much depends upon the pitch, and one's whole style and method of attack must be adapted to the local conditions. On turf allowance is made for the spring. One may play short with a run-up, by dropping flat, on concrete. On a dusty roadway some of the leading exponents throw beyond the mark and fall at a sharp angle for the rebound. But the surface of one's dreams is wet sand. The Old Campaigner and I have more than once walked several miles to mark out our course above the fringe of the ebbing tide. There only can one

enter into the full joy of that damp, elastic target where every shot falls with a soft "plip" into its place, where the run-up and the rebound cannot help you and you must pin your faith to the sheer precision of the flight.

The game may be played at a figure of concentric circles, at a shilling set on edge, into a golf hole or over intervening obstacles on to a table. Some carpets are good. It depends on the nap. A billiard-table is excellent. Bare boards are a little exasperating: they lead to an excess of hopping and rolling. The mark is as a rule surrounded by a circle enclosing what is known as the Parish, with heavy penalties for such as fall outside. There are many local by-laws, each enshrining some little nicety or refinement. And there is the Plute. This is established by negotiation before the game begins. It is a special feat, suited to the pitch, which if performed by either player instantly terminates the game in a sudden blaze of glory.

The old system of tossing has been entirely eliminated. The winner of every bout takes the heads and half the tails, an arrangement which adds a nice point, as when you are lying well you make bold to throw heads so as to accumulate a store of them. The faint-hearted, when in

a bad position, throws tails so as to cut his loss.

The other outstanding branch of the game—based upon curling—is what is known as Table Binge. It is played on a polished surface—a ball-room floor, a caravan table, a counter or a mantelpiece. The penny slides to its destination, and much pretty work may be done in cannons, inwicks and glancing angles. The class of penny counts for something here. I have known skilful players who preferred a rough King George, but for my own part I always work with a well-worn 1862 Victoria.

There is also the Round Table Variety: and the game of the Tilted Plank. . . .

I have never cared at all for the type in which the penny must spin in the air. . . .

The Rolling Game is still in its infancy. . . .

But there are immense possibilities ahead. As an instrument for using up the odds and ends of life Penny Dip has still a future before it. And it is comforting to reflect that it need not be abandoned with advancing years. However much oppressed by age and poverty one may become, as long as one has eyesight and strength to lift a hand, as long as one's credit is sufficient to borrow half a dozen of the humblest coins in

the currency, one need never drop out of the ranks.

Our match finished opportunely, for I scored a Plute just as the train came in. And the Old Campaigner took his departure. He had had the time of his life.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ENEMY

PERHAPS the caravanner should stick to his own station in life and be content to go his own way. Still it is manifestly impossible to avoid occasional brushes with the Enemy in the most popular parts of Scotland in the height of the season : and we were not content with such chance conflicts. We made deliberate attacks upon three of his leading strongholds—Strathpeffer, Braemar and the Trossachs. The first time it was quite an open frontal attack, and I think we may be said to have won. The second was a surreptitious advance under cover of disguise, and we were routed. The third collision was a drawn battle, resulting in a truce.

You may take it from me that it is a great place —Strathpeffer. It was about midday when we arrived there, and a piper was playing in the sunshine before the pump-room (if that is what they call it). An extraordinary number of extraordinarily smart people were to be seen, making a morning promenade or sitting about drinking the

waters. The scene was indeed not unlike a coloured poster of a Riviera resort, come to life. Now the Journalist and I, who were far in advance of the van, were not at all dressed for this sort of thing. (The Journalist wears a dark grey flannel shirt, and I always walk in blue shorts.) We felt that the explanation of our appearance was lacking, but we went boldly on. The Journalist, who is a man of conspicuous personal courage, even seated himself at a table in the very thick of it, and called for a glass of water. But I went into the butcher's to look for steak. Strathpeffer was a good deal perturbed about the Journalist, slightly affronted perhaps, above all puzzled. But the explanation was soon forthcoming. SIEGLINDA rolled down the hill and drew up in the centre of the throng, and from that moment Strathpeffer was satisfied and even pleased at our arrival. It no longer frowned upon us. In fact it made a variety of friendly overtures. It is possible that now that the piper had stopped playing the promenaders were suffering from a lack of entertainment (for the Journalist reported that the waters were not at all entertaining), and so delightful an object as SIEGLINDA, shot into their midst, was gratefully accepted as such. In any case it took us some time to complete our business, and

Herbert had to stand up to a cross-fire of questions and Sam nearly bit an old lady, and I had to admit that it was a nice way of seeing the country, an ideal holiday and better than a motor, according to the usual routine. At last we climbed the steep hill out of the town and stopped for a much-needed lunch under some trees at the top, conscious of having come very well out of it.

There is no way out of Braemar that it was possible for us to travel, so that we did not take the van beyond Ballater, where we camped for a day, making the rest of the journey there and back by motor-bus. I need hardly say that we bitterly regretted so reckless an undertaking. Apart from the horrors of transit, I am not sure that the expedition may be said to have been a success. We had laboriously searched out from the back of the locker all our best clothes ; for my part, I appeared in a collar and tie, and Herbert had made a most plucky attempt upon my brown shoes. As a finishing touch my Partner carried an umbrella. In Braemar we discovered the most tremendous hotel and partook of an extremely elaborate lunch. We sat conversing at our ease, exactly as if we were in the habit of doing this sort of thing every day. We ordered

waiters about. We called for specialities that were not on the menu. We refused to be startled by the luxurious table fittings ; we were not put out of countenance by the finger-bowls. We remembered that salad ought to go on a plate of its own ; we were even annoyed when we found that that plate was not in the shape of a corpulent and blunted half-moon. We felt that they had no right to fob us off with circular salad plates. And afterwards we tossed down our table-napkins and strolled into the lounge, where we sat toying with fashionable illustrated papers and drinking black coffee.

Then we went and strolled about Braemar. We visited shops and made all the proper purchases. We pored over a guide-book. And as a fitting climax, for we were quite determined to go through with the thing, we adjourned to the post office to send picture-postcards. But here at last we faltered. My Partner had borne up very well so far—you should have seen her flinging off her motor-veil as we came into the hotel, with a peevish remark about the dust : *they* didn't know that we had come in the bus. But now, as she seized her pen and faced her postcard (with a beautiful picture of Balmoral upon it), she began to waver.

"No," she said. "I can't do it. I can't do it after all."

"Come, come, Partner!" said I. "Pull yourself together. Be a tourist!"

"I feel as if I could face anything but a picture-postcard," she said. "It isn't so much the sending of them that I am thinking about. It's the people that have to get them. It's such a wicked misrepresentation."

"Well, we can't afford to break down now," said I. "We have done everything else."

"*I* know!" said my Partner, with a joyful smile, and she began writing furiously.

It was certainly a happy idea of hers to fill them with fictitious news and send them to all sorts of fictitious people with fictitious addresses. She informed Miss Jeanie Anstruther M'Gregor, The Heugh Braes, Inverstrathbittock-on-Spey, that we had been much troubled by the dust, but were having a ripping time. To the Station-master, Drumtoolie, Strath Damchillie, N.B., she sent the welcome news that her tea-basket and morocco dressing-case had been recovered; and she advised Mrs. Henderson Jones, Housekeeper, The Moat, by Pimhaven, Lincolnshire, that we did not expect to be home before Monday week. I had to stop her then. I remonstrated with her.

I told her that the post office after all was not paid to do this sort of thing. But she dropped them into the box with a sigh of relief.

"I think we have gone the whole hog now," she said.

"Yes," said I. "What a delightful change it has been after the hard life we have been living in the wilds, hasn't it?"

"Oh, yes," she said meditatively. "Great fun."

"And we shall have a real comfortable tea in that hotel," said I. "We shall go into the lounge and get in front of the fire, and order muffins and——"

"Don't you think," said my Partner suddenly, and her face lit up with excitement, "that if we could find a bus that was starting at once we might possibly get back in time to have tea in SIEGLINDA?" We rushed to the hotel to collect our belongings, and five minutes later we scrambled on to an outgoing bus.

Herbert was rather surprised to see us back so early, but as soon as we appeared along the road he got the Primus under way and the kettle was already on when we came in and dashed into the bedroom to change.

"I don't think we shall ever go so far astray

again," said my Partner soothingly, as she handed me my cup of tea. "Try not to think about it any more."

Our expedition to the Trossachs, when we camped SIEGLINDA at Callander and drove in an open carriage, has left behind it one sweet and grateful memory—of a long, placid, peaceful road, reserved for unique distinction among its fellows.

It no longer matters to me what happened when we got there, but I can still revel in the thought of the way there and back. Every mile of it was a choice experience, though not untinged with regret, for it brought home to me all that we have lost in these last few years, now that this road only is left. It recalled caravan tours in a different century from the present one. . . .

That is the road where no motors are permitted.

CHAPTER XXII

MEALS AND SUPPLIES

THERE is nothing that demands more careful attention than the purchase of chops. It needs more than that: it needs close personal supervision. There are certain loose sellers of chops who, if not watched, will cheerfully hack them off almost any part of the beast that happens to be uppermost, and call by this special designation fragments of any shape or size. But it is not enough to see for yourself the cross section from which they are to be cut. Even if that looks all right—and everyone knows that there is only one shape for a chop—it may begin to lose its strict form after one or two have been cut away, till progressively deteriorating, they become, before your two pounds are completed, absolutely shapeless. The only safe plan is to see the thing through. I put all this down simply to show that I am not readily had over chops. But in one of the towns in my D Class there lives a butcher who had me. I had selected my section, and he

went off behind a red curtain (which he keeps at the back of his shop to cloak and conceal his nefarious deeds), chopped away for a time, and then brought me out my parcel. But I am convinced he had substituted a different cut altogether, and I don't think those red curtains should be permitted in butchers' shops.

It was in Inverness that I got my champion sirloin, which was to establish what may perhaps be a record in touring sirloins. Its first appearance was on the Sunday at Contin, and it never left the stage till it made its final bow at Gairloch on the Thursday night. Nor was there any monotony in its repeated appearances. At Contin it was hot. At Achnasheen, where it had a warm reception, it was cold and suitably garnished with reinforcements and supports. At Kinlochewe it came on as rissoles, blent with tomatoes —and had an encore. At Loch Maree it was welcomed in the shape of *quenelles aux fines herbes*. And finally at Gairloch it was ushered in, amid applause, as a glorified shepherd's pie, with strips of bacon let in under the rafters and a crisp brown roof on the top.

That is not the only instance of camps that are linked together in my memory, by the run of a joint that ministered to each of them in turn.

Perhaps there is no heading under which my camps could be more clearly tabulated than that of the kitchen exploits that distinguished them. It was at Stonehaven that we had cockerels stuffed with prunes, and if you are doubtful as to whether that was a successful experiment, I can only say that it is always open to you to try. But you will have to be careful about your flavourings. On a wet night at Duns a mammoth mince-pie was in the bill. For we have long ago robbed the Christmas season of its specialities, and always carry mince-meat and plum pudding in the larder of SIEGLINDA. Especially to be recommended are small plum puddings, which at the end of a long day in cold, wet weather render most valuable service, the more so as they need no preparation. At Lochmaben we gave a dinner party, chiefly remarkable for the first appearance of *pommes-de-terre tout-à-fait.* I suppose that as long as I live I shall never exhaust the possibilities of the potato. At Perth, where again we were entertaining guests, the apple sauce was late for its proper occasion, and had to be turned surreptitiously into a sweet, rather a delicate operation in the crisis of dishing up. Still it scored a marked success in its new rôle. But much the best meals are forthcoming

when all supplies have failed and one must work with odds and ends. In the stress of the John o' Groat's campaign, at Bettyhill, we supped royally off a new dish called " Highland Comfort," whose secret has never been divulged. But I may say that there was a very salt finnan-haddock in it, a white pudding, a beaten egg or two, and many other constituents. I dare say it sounds horrid enough, but I must assure you that it bore no imprint of its humble origins.

At Kinloch Rannoch—it being the appropriate date—I served the Wagner Centenary Dinner. That was a celebration, to my mind, worthy of the highest effort, and it was characterized by a new departure of considerable importance, so that the name of Wagner has gained for me yet another valued memory. Previously though rich in suggestion it had never suggested to me the practice of deep-fat frying. It was only a few days before that I had possessed myself of a basket suited to frying in deep fat; and that evening Chips appeared in SIEGLINDA for the first time. The rest of the menu was sufficiently extensive and elaborate, and the speeches were generally approved.

But the chips were the crowning moment; it

was commonly agreed that they could not well be bettered.

Not only in its concrete results did this joyous practice justify itself. I have come to regard it as one of the most fascinating of culinary exercises. To sit, ensheathed from flying particles in housemaid's gloves, before the Primus, with the basket in one hand and the pan in the other, and contemplate that gurgling, golden, savoury jorum, hissing softly like retreating waves upon the sand —to lift up from time to time your glistening, dripping, amber-coloured burden—this is indeed a high moment in the routine of the cook.

There is a lady of my acquaintance who holds that no one of us is quite good enough to deserve mushrooms: 1913 was a remarkable year for them, and for the whole of the last month of the tour we practically never ran short. Night after night, as soon as the van was encamped, one of us would stroll out and gather as many as we could use. There would be a fresh crop awaiting us in the morning. We sent them away in boxes to our friends—not forgetting the lady, whose opinion I have quoted above: for it is quite certain that if there is anyone who does deserve mushrooms, it is she. And reluctantly we left bushels of them behind to waste. It was one of

the few occasions on which I have been able feebly to reach out toward the caravanner's ideal of "living off the country." In that respect my shortcomings are great. I have never baked a hedgehog in a ball of clay. I have never in my life used young nettles in the place of spinach. Nay, though I may blush to discover the fact, I have never poached a hare, nor trapped a rabbit. The caravanner who can go on from day to day making himself light and salutary meals from the herbage of the hedgerow and the berries on the bank has, of course, my respectful admiration. But beyond a few trout, some blackberries and mushrooms, we did nothing in all the course of our experience to cull our daily fare as we went on. The plain truth is that, faced with the problems of the commissariat, I have only one miserable solution to offer. Give me shops.

But the mushrooms were great. It is a real joy to handle anything so delicate and beautiful as one of these perfect little domes, with its covering of soft, sleek white kid and the delicious dull pink wavering ribs within. As a cook I ask for nothing better to play with. We tried them in many ways, but the best of all was this. (I am not fond of giving advice to caravan cooks, for I don't expect other people to follow my peculiar

ideas, any more than I myself follow the really extraordinary ideas of Mrs. Beeton : but this is simple and successful.) I used to skin them and take out the stalks and lay them on their backs in a frying-pan, with a small pat of butter in the centre. Then back and forward across the top I would roof them in completely with strips of fat bacon. It only remained to put the pan on the stove for ten or fifteen minutes to create an incomparable breakfast dish.

CHAPTER XXIII

ENCOUNTERS

THE widest hospitality exists in many Scotch farms. Hardly ever during the time that we were dependent upon farms were we unreasonably refused camping-ground, and it would be impossible to give you a full catalogue of all the flowers, vegetables, jam, scones, even pickles in pots and ferns in flower-pots, that were showered upon us. Our success in gaining admission was partly due no doubt to Herbert's tactful, indirect and diplomatic methods. But they did not always bear fruit. On one occasion he found an old woman in charge of the farm.

"Good evening, Mistress," said he politely.

There was no reply.

"It's a fine night."

"A've seen better."

"It's a bonny bit ye have here," looking round with cordial appreciation. But the answer was still more chilly.

"It micht hae been waur."

"Ye have some braw poultry, Mistress."

"The best o' them's awa'!"

And after that it was hardly worth while to suggest stabling for the horses.

We travelled due South, right through the heart of Aberdeenshire, by many small valleys and over many rounded hills, but always on a fairly good road. We had a feeling all the time of going across country, of being out of touch with main routes, until we reached Deeside. But no Scottish pilgrimage, we felt, could be held to be complete which had not traversed Strathbogie and Strathdon. Some three or four miles above Keith we camped—following a sound rule in undulating country of always camping at the top—on a rather dreary plateau, with sandy soil and meagre vegetation, set off by occasional ragged little knots of spruce and Scotch fir. It was a hungry land, as Herbert, with his eye on the horses, ruefully observed, but though the farmer had little to offer us it was clear at once that he was prepared enthusiastically to offer all he had. So we drew into a pasture field, near the steading. We were not long in finding out that we had fallen among friends. Every member of the three generations that occupied the house expressed the greatest delight at our "visit," as it was

pleasantly named. It was a queer, rambling, very old house with a cavernous kitchen, but had been brought more or less up to date some fifty years ago, the farmer assured me, when it was "baith hichtit and reefed." (I do not want to have to start a glossary so perhaps I ought to explain that by that he meant that it had been raised and roofed.) He was a keen, energetic, kindly man, struggling hard to make the most of his barren acres, and he employed quite unsparingly a curious affirmative expression with which he endorsed any sentiments of mine that fell in with his views. It had been a backward season, I surmised.

"Positeevely," said he. "Positeevely."

"You have a nice little lot of lassies," I remarked, as indeed he had. Seven of them and very near an age.

"Ou aye," said he. "There's a guid pickle o' them." Then he added thoughtfully, "Positeevely."

SIEGLINDA, when he had explored her interior, impressed him most favourably—"The best-got-up thing o' the sort, positeevely, that ever a saw."

The supper was rather scamped that evening, I am afraid, for there was no excuse for having

boiled potatoes two nights in succession, but I was so busy discussing agriculture, and especially with relation to the winter treatment of sheep in high altitudes, that my duties were neglected. An interest in farming is of course an asset of great value to the caravanner—enormously useful in getting on terms with the country population. And a fine bird's-eye view of Scottish agriculture is not the least of the valued possessions that I have won from my journeys.

I dropped into the kitchen for the third or fourth time that evening a little after eight, to suggest that the lassies should come out in a body and see the caravan. Their mother gladly accepted the invitation and went off to bring them, while I sat down in the huge fire-place, beneath great black oak beams, and remarked that it was a cosy corner for a winter's night.

"Positeevely."

I waited for a while, wondering at the delay, and at last I became aware of a subdued scuffling, pattering noise overhead, for all the world like mice in the wainscot. It continued for some time, with an occasional murmur of small treble voices. And at last it dawned upon me. All the bairns were already in bed, and a sudden and dramatic uprising was going on for the occasion. The

farmer remarked that he was sorry to keep me, but, positively, they would not be long. And indeed they had made very quick work of it. For already the scuffling was transferred to the stairs outside, the door opened and in they came, as neat a little batch of lassies as ever I wish to see. Their toilet had been extraordinarily rapid, but to all outward seeming it was quite sufficient for the great occasion. Each one appeared in a frock, bare legs and clogs. Each one (which had not been the case by day) wore two comely little pigtails, and in order that we might give each other courage, we all walked hand in hand in couples, the odd one pairing off with me in the most friendly manner. That was a great procession, for I cannot adequately convey to you the freshness and cleanliness and daintiness of it all or the subdued excitement with which—at this time of night!—we poured up the steps and took possession of SIEGLINDA.

After the trouble to which our guests had been put in order to be present the least we could do was to try to make it well worth while. So the call was a long one, and by the time it was over the caravan had given up each one of its many secrets and had even discovered a large "poke of sweeties" in the bedroom cupboard.

My only fear is that when at last the party broke up and the guests were bundled off for the second time to bed there would be little rest for some hours to come, and sleepy heads in the morning.

On the following night it was a hospitable grocer, with a farm of his own, near the town of Lumsden, who took us in. He also called on us in the evening, and we talked politics till a late hour. For although in most places agriculture, as a topic, is all-sufficient, I perceive that unless one is something of a politician, one cannot expect to go very far in Strathbogie.

After that we crossed the last of the heights and descended toward Deeside, stopping for the Sunday on a farm not far from Lumphanan, a place, I am bound to admit, almost destitute of the necessities of life (including water), where we were rather hard put to it to keep the horses going. And again on that Sunday we made a number of friends, and such frequent floral offerings arrived in the afternoon that we were in difficulties to display them all. We had so many callers that by the Monday morning the caravan had become a sort of popular rendezvous, where one dropped in to have a chat and meet one's friends ; and when we pulled out on to the road it chanced

that it was just the hour when the school-children were on their way, straggling down the hill behind us in little groups. Having picked up the keeper's two children (who had been to see us, bearing roses, the day before), the least we could do was to take up their friends as well. And if it came to that, where was one to draw the line ? The upshot of it was that every child in sight was stowed at last inside SIEGLINDA, for a " grand hurl "—to use the local idiom—down the hill. I do not remember how many we collected *en route*, but there was a thrilling scene when the van drew up at the foot and tumbled out its passengers at the school door.

I should like to return to Aberdeenshire some time before the legend of the doings of SIEGLINDA has been quite forgotten.

Near Coupar Angus we came into the fruit country strongly reminiscent of Kent, and travelled half a day through close-packed fields of raspberries, where pickers were busily at work. We had a great farmer as our host that night, the possessor of a laugh that emanated from a vast interior and shook his whole frame with an ecstasy of delight. He was determined that we should come in and play the piano, as both his wife and daughter were miserable performers,

and his thirst for music was continually thwarted. And after supper he showed me over the whole of his establishment and related to me the epic of his success, for he had started without capital or prospects fifteen years before. It was to one quality alone that he attributed his rapid rise to his present proud position—his courage. From the first he assured me " he wasna feared."

" Div 'e see yon meer wi' the foal yonder ? "

" Yes," said I.

" She cost me ninety pound when she was a yearlin'." He roared with laughter. " Hech ! Hech ! " he gasped. " I'm no feared tae spend ma siller on a meer, am I ? "

With the same indomitable pluck he had just put in a new thrashing mill and purchased two self-binders, all in the same season.

" I'm no feared, am I ? " he demanded in glee.

And when he assured me that his had been a fruit farm five years ago and that he had already got rid of the " berries " and turned over the whole establishment into a dairy farm, and it was paying him fine,

" You're no feared," said I, with admiration.

" That's it ! " he cried, roaring with laughter.

Thus I was given a most vivid picture of his headlong career, a succession, as far as I could

judge, of the wildest and most urgent experiments, but for my part I attribute his brilliant advance not so much to his pluck, which no doubt was great, as to his great gift of laughter, for I doubt if I have ever met his equal there.

He had one queer thing to show me in the form of a hybrid bird which his dog had found in a stubble field and which he assured me, and I could well believe him, had baffled all the experts in the neighbourhood and even "a gentleman out of a museum," who had come all the way from Glasgow to look at it. I am too poor an ornithologist to tackle the riddle of its mixed identity, but there was certainly a strong blend of the duck about it, though, truth to tell, it was also mighty like a pheasant. It was living a secluded and contented life with the rest of the poultry, and I should imagine that if my friend could get a good price for it he would not be feared to effect a sale.

One dreary evening in Ross-shire we fell in for the third time with the Tinker, who was encamped on a little knoll two or three hundred yards up the road. I went up to see him after supper. His tent was in the form of a vast cavern, a rounded structure, not more than about four feet high. It was made of carpet, felt, canvas—an old sail

that had been given to him at one of the fishing villages, and sundry horse-cloths, all welded together and several ply thick in places. The inside was in total darkness, without any opening of any sort except the turned-back flap where one went in, and in this doorway a cheerful coal fire was burning in the rain, with a pot slung over it. Most of the smoke, by this simple arrangement, remained in the tent, and in the course of my conversation with the proprietor the children kept popping out one by one for a brief interval, partly to breathe, it would seem, and partly to blink encumbered eyes. Peering into the deep recesses of the tent, where the red glow spent itself in the distance, and where vague reclining forms could be made out in the gloom, one had a very fair idea of the condition and home surroundings of prehistoric man in his ancestral cave.

They had stood the weather, which had been bad, wonderfully well, my friend informed me, but when I asked him if the children had been quite warm and dry the night before,

"Warm," he remarked thoughtfully, "yes. But dry, no. We were none of us dry."

There did not, however, seem to be much scope for sympathy. Seldom have I seen a more con-

tented family, and the children all had a strikingly healthy and well-fed appearance. There was a wayside station near by, and one of the small boys was much taken up with the railway. I found him peering into a coach of first-class carriages with dilated eyes. " Wouldn' it mak' a lovely gorryvon ? "

In the morning, after the Official Photographer had taken special portraits of the baby and we had bequeathed sundry spare supplies upon the rest of the tribe, we said farewell.

As showing the varieties of human experience that fall to the lot of the caravanner I cannot do better than describe my two callers of two consecutive nights in the neighbourhood of Dalwhinnie. The first was a dear little, old, white-haired lady clean and sun-burned and wrapped in a brown shawl, who came to ask for a few lumps of sugar as the shop was closed. She was walking to Perth, she told me, with her husband, who had got work there. I asked if there was anything else she would like. But no, they were only short of sugar, it seemed. They had hoped to sleep in a shed by the railway, but it had been burned down since last they passed that way. But it was " no great matter " as she knew of a cave not far from the road only two miles on. There

seemed to me to be something rather cheerless about a cave, but she made little of it. It was a grand night and they would do fine. And so she heard her husband calling and slipped away with her sugar. I had expected to overtake them the next day, but they must have been too early on the road, for we never saw them again.

Our other caller was a very magnificent person, who arrived in a motor-car and asked if she might be allowed to look over the van, as she had so often wondered how life in such a thing was possible. She graciously inspected us, and, I think, rather approved on the whole, assuring us—I don't know why—that it was very brave of us to do this sort of thing. And then she rolled away to her hotel.

And we were very much impressed.

CHAPTER XXIV

CLOTHES

It is an intense satisfaction in loading up a caravan to be able to reduce the question of clothes to its simplest and sanest elements and get down at once to realities. Shoes that are soft and strong, stockings that are good for honest wear, garments that will keep you warm and a waterproof that will keep you dry, head-gear for sun and rain, a sound suit of oilskins, and slippers that can defy wet grass in the evenings, are stowed gladly into their places. But nearly all the follies and falsities, the studs and ties and clips and collars, the waistcoats and gloves can be cheerfully left behind. It is likely that there will be a little secret store of such things pushed away at the back under the bed, with a view to contingencies, but you always hope that you will not be so unfortunate as to have to rake them out.

I am very fond of my shoes. When I have a sound pair in good order I like to look down at them in meditative moments. I like to pit one

against the other and try to decide which is the better shoe. They always have as much dubbin as they ask for. Stockings I rather like to buy as I go along, so as to make up a geographical collection. Blue shorts are beyond all praise for walking, and my canvas shirts are all cut off at the elbow so as to avoid degraded cuffs. I find it best to make up my mind when the tour begins that my Norfolk jacket is never to return. That is a severe wrench, for though I do not much mind parting with new clothes, in response to charitable requests, before I have become fully acquainted with them, I naturally hate to part with old ones. But if you do not boldly pass sentence upon your Norfolk you will find that you are trying to preserve it from the severer shocks and scars, and if you are going to begin that sort of thing you may as well go home and take up again the life where clothes are used for ornament and people are willing to dodge about to keep them clean. Whereas if you have made up your mind that this is its last journey your Norfolk will become the perfect shield, absorbing bruises and disfigurements. What matter if it be torn on a nail? You can always cut off anything that is loose. What matter if it be stained with ink? Better there in reality than on the bed, the floor,

a chair or the woodwork of the wall. And if it is more convenient for you to carry your watch in a new pocket you can always cut a hole at the right place for the chain. The caravanner is comfortable in his clothes. They are his servant ; not his master. It is well to keep the pockets sound, for you will find that they have a good deal of miscellaneous stuff to carry, and you cannot always be hunting in the lining for your money or your knife.

But foremost of all stands the sweater. I declare to you that—even before my housemaid's gloves—I count it the first of my possessions.

Perhaps it would be well to look its blemishes fearlessly in the face before I abandon myself to the warm appreciation which is its due ; and so I say at once that if the sweater has a fault it is that it becomes unlovely in old age. That is of course distressing. It may be said to be born at its highest moment of development : it never gets seasoned : it never ripens or grows mellow. Let me admit it at once. It goes slowly and steadily downhill. Perhaps that very fact sets a keener edge on one's affection by tingeing it with pathos. Anyhow, there it is. A Norfolk jacket mellows as the years go by, ripens with long usage, with every drenching and drying that

it undergoes : indeed it never attains to its full charm and dignity till it has been tempered by wind and rain and sun. It is merely raw and crude when it is new, before it is broken in and shaped and moulded to one's form.

But the sweater deteriorates. Its first visit to the wash is a first step upon the downward course : never again can it quite recapture the virgin woolly splendour of the shop. Inevitably by degrees, while one looks helplessly on, it loses its bloom, becomes attenuated in its texture and at last begins to assume the dull, grey-yellow hue of slow decay. The process is spread over many years, but in the end it loses its grip, grows baggy and would even flap about the loins ; and then we know that its course is run. For this reason it is well to harden one's heart, never growing too fond of individuals, but embracing with enthusiasm the class as a whole.

It has no other fault, for it is the one sane and perfect garment. Its counterpart, the waistcoat —a thing I have always despised—is a terrible example of what it has escaped from, what it might have been. The dress waistcoat above all stands as a monumental specimen of the sort of thing that can happen to clothing when it is allowed to dwindle and shrink to a snipped and

exiguous pattern. But the sweater is ample, generous and efficient. How easily it is drawn on—how exquisitely does it fit, envelop and ensheath the wearer! I believe that my outlook upon every new day brightens at the moment when, fresh from a cold tub, I reach out expectant arms and dive into its hospitable depths. And when I have drawn it on luxuriously I feel twice the man I did. I can never have enough of them, for no bedroom seems to me to be adequately furnished without a sweater or two, slung by knotted arms at the back of the door or flung carelessly over the end of the bed. It is well to have a threefold supply: enough for use, enough to lie about and enough to lend to a friend in need. And when I fit out SIEGLINDA for the road I love to tumble them in with a lavish hand.

I need hardly say that the sweater must be white. It is no use tampering with that condition. Even the tobacco-coloured product of camel's hair that has enjoyed a certain vogue will not do. For there is a bloom, a fleeciness, a suggestion of the wool of blameless sheep made pure about the white sweater that cannot be renounced. It should of course be wholly innocent of button or of pocket. Let us not break or mar its perfect lines with any form of hem or stitch, ridge or

joining. It should be widely open at the neck, for it is well to have no dealings with that spurious breed which culminates in a vast, shapeless collar. And above all it should be quite unadorned. Badges, ribbons or braided edges cannot set it off nor make it one whit more lovely than it is. It is deplorable that in the hands of some misguided persons it has become the vehicle for " colours."

Finally it should be ample : too large, much too long in the sleeves and a great deal too thick. But at no spot should it lose its grip and close embrace. Plucked between the thumb and forefinger and drawn out to a sharp point it should spring back with a crisp and instant elasticity.

Often has the sweater come to my aid in the hour of stress. There has been an accident among the rapids and the small store of change clothing in the punt has been submerged. One must face the night under canvas with few garments and a meagre packing of straw, and it is cold. I find, quite out of place among the food supplies, a sweater that has miraculously escaped. And the Old Campaigner and I toss for it, the loser taking the extra rug. So all is well. Or I am caught on the moor in a driving shower of hail which whips my neck and ears. The spare sweater out of my

knapsack is twisted in a moment into a woolly helmet, tied by the sleeves round my throat, and the tempest howls in vain. For the sweater is more than a garment. It is a muff, a foot-warmer, a comforter—ready to minister in the nick of time to the head or neck or hands or feet or legs. It is good to sit on in wet places or to lie on when the ground is hard. It is grateful and elastic as a pillow.

I am not sure that a man may not be pretty fairly valued and apprized by the number of sweaters that he keeps and the use to which he puts them.

CHAPTER XXV

COUNTIES AND CORNERS

Our enterprise of collecting all the counties of Scotland to bring home as trophies of the long campaign only became urgent upon our last march when we brought Sieglinda back from Inverness. That march lacked something in directness, for it headed alternately for all the points of the compass, sweeping southward through Perthshire, northward through Dumfriesshire, touching the West coast in Ayrshire and the East in Berwickshire, twice crossing the whole breadth of the country and once dipping over the border into England. It was in fact a march from Inverness to Haddington, via Stranraer, which is equivalent to a journey from London to Paris via Berlin. But we were picking up and marking off new counties all the way. Two counties worried us above all the rest—Haddington and Clackmannan. And our two chief turning-points were at the corners—at Stranraer and Berwick-on-Tweed. Of the left-hand bottom

corner I have nothing but what is pleasant to relate.

We had not found the scenery of the Ayrshire coast very striking, whatever it may be to the trained eyes of golfers ; but after leaving Ballantrae and climbing the hill over Downan Point we enjoyed better fare in this respect. Glen App is one of those long gradual descents, through richly wooded country and with a rushing stream far below that we had come to know so well. It is closely related, one might say, to the road that leads down into Gairloch ; to that between Keith and Fochabers ; to Glen Farg on the Great North Road, South of Perth. And in this case the distant view was enriched by a vision of the open sea. We came out on Loch Ryan in the very nick of Wigtownshire, between the mainland and the little collar-stud protuberance that makes such a dainty finish at Scotland's Southern end. It was a heavenly afternoon, the sea was about as blue as it is ever likely to be, and we were able to draw off the road upon the beach. It is seldom that it is possible to camp actually on the edge of the sand. Not more than half a dozen times in widely diverse places had we done so, and we always made the most of it, paddling, bathing, and gathering shells and telling each

other how much we were benefiting by the sea air. But the chief sensation of the evening was the passing, after dark, of the Belfast boat.

In the morning we drove into Stranraer and turned her head for the East.

As for the town of Berwick, I am reminded of the views of Brigadier Gerard upon Venice. It was, he thought, the most ridiculous place he had ever seen, for he could not imagine how the designer of it had ever intended his cavalry to operate. In the same way the designer of Berwick clearly overlooked caravans. We arrived by a sort of tortuous little slum on the South of the river, where the road was up and it was decidedly jumpy work creeping along between deep trenches. Then came the Border Bridge, which is very long and narrow, and on the far side we had to make our way through narrow, steep, angular, paved streets. It was much the most difficult town we had passed through.

But now at last we were headed straight for Haddington, which had been our final goal. It had exercised a strong compulsion on us for weeks back, tucked away as it was in the most inconvenient corner that it was possible to find. The old coast road from Berwick to Edinburgh is easy travelling all the way, with fine sea views

in places. On the second day we reached Cockburnspath, to learn, for we made close enquiries, that we were not yet in Haddington. There were some who said that the march between the two counties was the first burn we crossed: others maintained that the railway marked the boundary. Finally one seemingly wise old man assured us that it was two miles on. We gave it three miles, for we had not come so far to miss our goal through inadvertence at the last, and there, on a gigantic farm, set about by vast symmetric stacks, we camped on the edge of the shore. Something had to be done to celebrate the occasion, and the sirloin was served with a special garnishing of eight different vegetables.

Clackmannan, a month before, had been a pressing anxiety to us. Knowing this county only by name, I had none the less always been fascinated by its possibilities. It has such a hectoring, insolent, high-sounding title, a name quite big and bold enough, one would say, for Perthshire or Inverness. And yet I knew very well that we ran no little danger of missing it altogether if we grew careless or unobservant. It was clear that there could be no doubt about its existence, for it is distinctly—if minutely—marked on all really first-class maps *as a county*,

but we became rather nervous after we left Perth lest we should pass it by. We made enquiries. We kept a sharp look-out over hedges; we stopped from time to time to go down lanes on either side. We scanned the surrounding country from the tops of hills. We advanced more and more slowly, feeling our way. But we did not find it that day, and we spent a rather anxious night, knowing well that if the morrow should prove to be thick and misty we might be baffled after all. Herbert had a wild idea of camping in Clackmannan, but I always like to have room to turn round and to get at the back boxes and so on. I hate to be crowded.

We felt that we were getting "warm," as the children say, as soon as we took the road on the following morning, and there is no doubt whatever that some time in the course of that forenoon we did cross the county from end to end, though when exactly it began and when we emerged from it has never quite been established. It was a great satisfaction to us. It showed the anxious care with which we were carrying out our programme, that we should thus have gone into details, so to speak. I am not sure that I do not look upon it as one of the chief of our exploits. Had I not already determined the name of this

book, there would be much to be said for a title that suggested itself to me that afternoon—"Caravanning in Clackmannan."

In any case I shall never regret it. In that distant day, when my position is such that newspaper fellows will come and interview me about nothing in particular, I shall not be able to speak of my achievements in remote parts of the globe perhaps. I shall not be able to say—not at least with any truth—that I have been in the Straits Settlements or Peru. But I shall be able to strike a certain note of distinction all the same. Asked to reveal the more important events of my past life, I shall reply, quite simply, "I have been in Clackmannan."

I have a notion of carrying out a tour in Huntingdon some day.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAMPERS' LUCK*

WELL, yes, of course one is roughing it, as they say. That is all right. You don't expect a vagrant's life to be a bed of roses. I am not complaining of the rules of the game. I am always prepared to rough it in a spacious, weather-proof, well-ventilated and luxuriously appointed caravan, with a first-class stove, comfortable chairs and a thundering good bed. The trouble lies not in the inherent privations of existence on tour—far from it. The trouble lies solely in the ups and downs, the undulations—if you take me—in the run of luck. Even so, it would be all right if one thing did not lead to another. But it does.

It runs in cycles generally of about twenty-four hours. You can nearly always tell them as soon as you get up. It is in the air. The rubber bath acts as a sort of rough index for the day. If it behaves well you are pretty sure to be all right. But if it begins flopping over when you are filling

* My thanks are due to the proprietors of *Punch* for permission to republish this chapter.—B. S.

it and flooding the corner where you keep the boots, and ends by turning on you viciously as you are emptying it out of a high window and discharging its contents over your shoulder on to the stove, you are in for it. You must go forward in faith, with no immediate hope to lighten your steps, with your eye fixed bravely on To-morrow. In the meantime you may confidently expect a bad egg for breakfast, a heavy downpour of rain while you are packing up, a broken trace when you stick in the gate, a mistake in the map which leads you into impossible country and a lame horse. You will find that you have forgotten the corkscrew and left behind your only pipe, where you laid it down on the wall while you were harnessing; the shops in the village that you are counting on are closed for the weekly half-holiday; your letters have been sent to the wrong address. You endure delays in finding camping-ground, for the farmer has recently made over the farm to his brother-in-law (and can decide nothing without his consent), who is just now at the station with the milk. In any case he has sub-let the only possible field to the butcher, who is at a market four miles off and (when he is found) can't move the cattle out unless he has permission to put them in the meadow that belongs to the

aged schoolmaster, who is in bed with a sharp attack of pneumonia and can't be consulted, without the permission of the doctor, who is not likely to call again before 6.30, as he has had to go into the next valley to assist in gathering up a carriage accident. That is the sort of way it works.

And, as I have said, one thing leads to another.

It is late at night and everything is at last in order. It occurs to you, just before turning in that you will clean the fish for breakfast. That will not take two minutes. You go into the kitchen, get a bowl, a sharp knife and a bucket. In pouring the water into the bowl you slip and flood the floor. You mop it up, and then you must wash your hands. You get a basin, fetch the soap from the bedroom and pour out more water. You wash your hands. Very well, you return to the fish. The candle has almost burned out. You go and grope for another in the bottom drawer of the chest of drawers in the bedroom and have the misfortune to get your hand into the blacking—which should not have been there. You light the new candle, wash your hands and return to your fish. But by degrees you are getting deeper in. The candle topples over. You had it jammed on the top of the hot stump and it has gone weak in the knees. You make a fishy

grab at it. You are too late to save it, but you knock something off the table and can hear it dripping quietly in the dark. You plunge fishy hands into your pockets, but find you have no matches. You have to go for them to the bedroom, stepping on the lard—which had also rolled off the table—*en route*. You find on your return that that dripping sound was methylated spirit, and it has contaminated the frying-pan. Very well. You fix your candle. Everything is getting fishy by this time, so you wash your hands. You return to your fish. Then you try to wash the frying-pan with cold water, and fail. You must boil water, and you have no water left. You light a lantern and go to the spring (600 yards). You propose to ignite the stove. It is empty. The oil is beneath the van, and it is now raining hard. You bring the oil and upset the milk which some fool had left on the step. You light the stove ; boil the water ; wash the pan ; wash the floor ; chuck away the lard ; wash your hands ; put out the stove ; take back the oil and put the fish in the frying-pan. It is now two hours since you began, and your net loss is one quart of milk, a pint of methylated spirit and a chunk of lard. You see what I mean when I say that one thing leads to another. , . .

But then, if the morrow is a good day it will inaugurate a new cycle. There will be no looking back. The fish will not, after all, taste of methylated spirit. You will find enough milk in the blue jug. As you empty the bath out of the window it will quite gratuitously put out a rising conflagration where some one had set fire to the old newspapers and might have set fire to the van. At breakfast if you happen to drop a plate off the table it will not break—but it will kill a wasp. As the day goes on itinerant butchers and bakers will minister to you in the nick of time. A preternaturally intelligent postman will pursue you on a bicycle with the lost letters. By taking a wrong turning you are brought at once to the most perfect camp of the whole tour, in a sheltered meadow by a winding stream, with a spring of pure water welling up within ten yards. One of the lamps of the stove goes out, while you are neglecting it, and thereby saves the sirloin from being grossly overdone.

And late at night a sudden heavy shower extinguishes the gramophone of the party that is camped on the other side of the hedge.

CHAPTER XXVII

RAIN AND LACK OF RAIN

THE great spate caught us at Loch Maree on our way back from the West. There had been a sudden blatter of rain just before we started from Gairloch, but it had cleared up and the afternoon was dull and dry. We had no idea of what we were in for as we drew on to our old ground by the stream. We even went so far as to put up the camp stable, which was to stand, a bedraggled monument among the mists, for many hours to come. We intended to camp for the Saturday and Sunday, as we were expecting the Journalist and his Wife to join us on the Saturday afternoon, and we spent the evening in putting up the other tent and getting out extra camp furniture, so that the establishment was spread out to its full extent in preparation for the lounging outdoor life of our two days' respite. But an old seaman at Gairloch had told me that we would be fortunate if the weather kept up. "It's a good country this, for rain," he said.

The spate began on the Friday evening. It cannot be held to have ended before the early hours of the following Wednesday morning. It did not rain quite continuously, but, as far as we could judge, there were not more than six or seven hours out of a hundred when rain was not coming down. Never on our travels has our good fortune in the matter of meeting with dry weather, while actually on the road, been so conspicuous. For we were able to make the most of the few hours when it was dry in getting on with our return journey. But never have I been abroad in a caravan in such a thoroughgoing rain as that. Throughout the Friday night it came down straight, in torrents, and with the morning we found our outlook clipped and reduced to a few yards of steaming mist. We could see no more of the mountains or the loch, and the road vanished within a stone's throw into white obscurity.

On the Saturday the wind began to rise and the rain increased in force all day. We lived a retired, domesticated life, for there were many letters to answer, and hardly put our heads out of the van before lunch. But it became clear as the afternoon wore on and the outlook grew darker that we could not condemn the

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Journalist and his Wife to sleep in the tent. It was not actually leaking, but it would be impossible to keep the water out if anything touched the canvas, as is almost sure to happen with two beds inside, and the surroundings were becoming soft and boggy. I got out the spade and trenched both tents well about against encroaching floods, and Herbert covered his bedding with a waterproof rug; and we consulted weather prophets, all of whom adopted a most pessimistic tone and concurred in the opinion that it looked like "the beginning of a spate."

Then I got out the Primus stove and kept it going the whole afternoon in the extra tent. The canvas, cooked on one side and drenched on the other, remained in a sort of neutral condition of clammy warmth, and we concluded that we must make our arrangements to accommodate all the crew inside. That is rather a complicated undertaking and means not a little hauling back and forth, stowing away, expanding and unfolding, fitting and adjusting. But it can be quite comfortably done.

The Journalist and his Wife appeared about 5 p.m., having travelled straight from London to Achnasheen, and then traversed the hills in an open motor, and I could not but envy them the

moment of arrival, for SIEGLINDA is a hospitable refuge at such a journey's end.

Herbert, who had now transferred the Primus to his own tent, reported that there was nothing wrong with his sleeping outfit, and after supper we stowed away my Partner and the Journalist's Wife in the bedroom, while the Journalist and I fitted out the middleroom for ourselves, by shutting down tables and chairs, putting down mattresses and making beds. We had an excellent night, and woke to find that the wind was now coming off the loch in a North-Westerly direction and the rain was coming down in sheets.

I have said that all weather is good for caravanning, and I may add that I look back with much pleasure and amusement upon the queer life that we were forced to live on that Sunday at Loch Maree. It was quite unmatched in my experience ; it entailed much extra labour, but it was entirely free from hardship. I had now shut the front of the van, as the rain was driving that way, and an eastern window was opened for ventilation. This reduced my kitchen to darkness, and I must have a candle burning. My cooking operations were not assisted by this nor by the fact of enormous bales of wet clothes being

handed in to dry at all hours of the day. For of course we did not, as my Partner would say, "stuff in the house." We went walks in divers directions, and brought back our dripping garments to be restored. They were all round me in the kitchen, decorating the walls on either side, cluttering up the space above the stove and flapping about my head whenever I moved. I managed to bequeath an extra mackintosh on Herbert, as a supplement to his own, and he went on for several days cheerfully getting the two wet through in regular rotation. He had reinforced his tent with an ingenious rampart of horse-cloths, and the Primus still did good service for him. But by the late afternoon the state of affairs outside was becoming more and more serious. The little stream, which, when first we had known it, had been five or six feet below our level, was now beginning to flood the camp. A large pool formed beneath the van and crept rapidly nearer to the tent, and almost the whole open space beyond us was under water. With much interest we watched the rising levels, and as it became clear that the tent would be drowned out before morning, Herbert (although he protested loudly against such a craven surrender) was sent to sleep at the hotel.

There was no change whatever in the prospects on the Monday morning, though the flood had gained little upon us, and the rain was still coming down lustily. But we were due to move on to Kinlochewe that afternoon if the road would carry us. On this point our advisers were hopeful. This road, we were told, was really at its best in wet weather. That was what it was accustomed to. It was in a drought that it generally gave way. All the same, we had some anxious moments (when, as Herbert said, it "didn't do to stop and think") where the surface quaked and undulated as we passed.

As soon as the horses were put in the rain stopped, and although it came on again before our three hours' journey was over, we had it dry most of the way. It needed a big pull to take us out of our morass, but Sam was in form that morning and lifted the van all by himself before Simon got properly going. We were fortunately on hard ground that night at our old camp at Kinlochewe, where we stopped on the farm road, and Herbert's tent was fairly favourably placed: which was just as well, as that was the worst night of all.

So far we had met only with rain and wind, but now the temperature fell and driving sleet greeted

us in the morning, while the summit of Slioch, in the only glimpse we had of it, was deep in snow.

Loch Maree is completely surrounded by high ramparts, except on the extreme West, where there is no passable road, and all that can be said is that it is easier to get out at the end than at the sides. Even then it is a heavy pull, rising 700 feet in less than three miles. It was still raining when we left Kinlochewe, and all the world was charged with water to an amazing degree. It was as if the soil had been saturated long ago and could not hold another drop. Water lay deep in every hollow, it trickled down every bank, it oozed up from the mosses underfoot and coursed muddily along the road, it seemed to exude from the very rocks, making them glisten in the steel-grey light : and the air was full of the turbulent voices of the swollen streams. The hill proved to be not nearly so bad as Borgie Brae, though it was fully twice as long, and Sam and Simon worked their way up it methodically in short stages.

The rain went off for a time before we reached the top and we had a last wintry glimpse along the loch, the heights on both sides now grey with melting snow, before we turned the corner and

began the descent to Achnasheen. But long before we reached our destination at the Corrugated Camp it was coming down again in sheets, so that we could hear the iron shed resounding afar off to the lashing of the drops. We drew in to the Eastern side, where we were excellently sheltered, and it rained all night.

But that was the last of it, and as soon as the spate had spent itself there was no looking back. We entered at once upon a spell of warm, still days. That was early in June. A most startling change had come over the country when we came South in the autumn. For the great drought was then at its height. The crops between Dunkeld and Pitlochry were most pitiful, and everywhere there was shortage of water; even the rushing torrent of the Garry was reduced to a succession of almost stagnant pools. The grocer in Dunkeld, as he sliced the bacon with his guillotine knife, assured me that such a season for weather had never been known in these parts. In January they had had to endure the heaviest snowfall within recent years, which had seriously damaged the trees and blocked up some of the young woods for a month or more. In May came the floods, when the Tay twice overflowed its banks and devastated the country, and now they

had the drought. The Tay had not been so low for a century, and the Tummel Water during the past week had uncovered a certain white rock, as it receded, which had not been seen above the surface since 1826. There had also been a plague of caterpillars in June. But there I cut him short, for I am not at all sure that caterpillars can be classed as weather.

I could not quite understand his manifest despondency. For it was a wonderful summer, the hotels were full, Dunkeld was prosperous—groceries were clearly in demand. But when I put it to him I learned that his heart was not in groceries. He was a fisherman, and that was the secret of his despair. I reflected afterwards that that hardly covered the case of the caterpillars, but I had no time to go back and ask him about that.

A few days later, near Balloch, we found ourselves at camping time in a country bereft of level spaces, and had to pull up a steep little lane, leading to a farm at the hill-top. The lane became altogether too steep, but we managed to draw in at the side of it, among the trees by a spring. It was a capital "seat," but far from level. We contrived, however, by building up the back wheels with flat stones for the best part

of a foot, to reach a satisfactory settlement, and Herbert went on with the horses to the farm above.

Very soon, as the evening approached, it became evident that we were encamped upon a spot of some moment to the inhabitants of the surrounding country. For the little spring on the bank beside us, which discharged through a fragment of iron pipe into a broken trough below, had come, by reason of the drought, into a sudden glare of publicity and appreciation that it had never known before. That feeble trickle had to support dozens of households far and wide, whose usual water supplies had been long exhausted. All the evening we watched the straggling chain of water-carriers moving up the hillside, and from my kitchen, where (with the front open) I sat at the stove, I looked down upon a changing scene of quiet activity.

It is admirable no doubt to be able to draw water at will from a tap without stirring from the house, but perhaps we have lost something in sociability and the communal life, now that each of us may sit at home alone, hugging his private supply. For in old days a spring, which fed a whole village, must have done much to draw people together, to give opportunity for

neighbourly encounters, for exchanging news, for making acquaintances and handing on messages. It is a sort of central point to keep us all in touch with one another. I am not sure that anything quite takes its place. These engineers and plumbers and such people have a good deal to answer for. I suppose that as we get more and more scared about our failing coal supply that other age-old institution of the fire-side will also have to go. Each of us will sit apart, on chilly winter nights, hugging—perhaps more literally this time—his private radiator, and family life will suffer a blow from which it may never recover. Certainly many of my own most valuable encounters when caravanning have taken place while my bucket filled at the spring.

Very little of that precious water was allowed to go to waste, and I had to watch my opportunity to get my own supplies, for throughout the evening hours the steady stream of new arrivals went on, and generally several were waiting for their turn. And in that matter the mode of procedure—which I may well believe is as old as the hills, as old in any case as the time when first mankind carried water in vessels—was not to form a waiting queue, but to set down your bucket in its due order to represent you and then

turn aside to beguile the time till it moved up the rank. All was done in the most seemly routine as if the traffic of the spring was part of the normal life of the place, and yet these were by nature tap-users, brought here only by a great emergency. The men and women passed the time in conversation or sitting idly on the bank. But the children—and most of the water-carriers were children—had matters of far more moment in hand. In the course of a few weeks they had elaborated a whole system of sports and pastimes, so that not a moment was lost. You planked down your can at once and turned eagerly to the bank above to take part in a continuous game, which lasted throughout the whole evening, a newcomer joining in every minute or two, as one of the others dropped off, so that the whole *personnel* changed frequently without in any way upsetting the run of events. The organization seemed to me to be perfect, though I do not profess to have understood the finer points. It was not my idea of Blind-Man's-Buff, nor yet of Hide-and-Seek, though it partook in a measure of both of them. There was much chasing and catching, hiding and evading in its composition. At times the players clapped their hands in unison, and when a special crisis occurred they sang.

But that bank had other attractions. There were fine trees to climb, you could slide down the hard brown turf in one place, and there was a depending branch on which you could swing perilously out over the very lane. It was indeed often decidedly annoying to be called away because your bucket, moved up by some friendly hand, was full and blocking the way.

And now that the rain has come and the drought is over I suppose the little spring has lost its customers and pours out an even and neglected stream to trickle down the gutter. Next year there will be no more pleasant summer evenings on the bank. But on the other hand we may look for an extra half-hour in bed in the morning, when we don't have to fetch the water before we go to school. In Wigtownshire I watched two very small children with a pony-cart, filling great milk cans from a spring by the roadside. They began before seven o'clock in the morning, handing up a jug at a time, and it took them nearly an hour to complete their cargo. I am not defending the drought, though it was the cause of some worthy new habits and customs among us. The truth is that we were all glad to see the rain when it came on the morning when we reached Stranraer, even farmers with half

their harvest out, even caravanners. We are not at all accustomed to long spells of dry weather in Scotland, and I do not think that they suit our temperament very well.

Ever since the beginning of that week the weather had been showing signs of giving way, but with a great reluctance. We had had some misty hours on the Monday and a few driving skiffs of rain. The Tuesday had been showery, and it had been wet when first we took the road on the Thursday morning. It was rather as if the perfect balance of the long dry spell had been disturbed, and after oscillating more and more violently it came down with a crash on the Friday morning.

That was the real end of the drought in Scotland. We had weeks of glorious weather before us yet, for this mighty summer did not abdicate until its course was run. But for the most part the drought was broken in those next three days, all the vast draining system of burn and loch and river, which had been largely in abeyance for many weeks, began to work again and water supplies came back to taps that had long been dry.

We travelled all day in the rain, stopping for a time to shop in Stranraer, and then—having

worked out the extreme South-West almost to its limit—turned sharply to the East across the neck of the peninsula. We camped that night—in a stackyard—near Glenluce. On the Saturday also it rained all day with increasing force and determination, and I was a good deal disappointed and annoyed. Not of course that I objected to the rain, for I welcomed it, and I had been hoping for some time that we should get safely round the corner before the weather broke. Rain is quite negligible on the road so long as it is coming from behind. The front of the van remains open as usual and all goes on well. It is only when we have to travel into the teeth of it that the thing becomes complicated. The whole of the front must then be shut up, and it is dreary work sitting inside, while Herbert remains, a sport for the elements, on the footboard. Now rain in the South of Scotland, when it sets seriously to work (as it so often does), comes almost without exception from the South-West, and as soon as we had turned the corner our route would lie for ten days to come in a North-Easterly line. So you will see that I had made my dispositions most carefully, and when the rain began just as we reached the corner I had good cause to congratulate myself. I smiled at the streams upon the

windows in the morning, for you see a little forethought and knowledge of weather conditions of the district. . . .

All day it rained in torrents from the North-East.

SIEGLINDA pounded along through the puddles, hermetically sealed, and the only cheerful item in the outlook was the figure of Herbert, which certainly did something to set off the flat, closed front of the van. In Stranraer I had bought for him a beautiful bright yellow oilskin coat with a sou'-wester hat to match, in which get-up, glistening with descending streamlets, he posed as a commanding figure-head.

Rain does not always fit very well into the life of the caravanner perhaps, and that is a matter of great regret to me. There is no doubt that a running cargo of wet clothes is more than any caravan can carry, so that one is forced to defend oneself with mackintoshes, and cannot go out freely to get wet through as I prefer to do. There I have a grudge against caravanning as one who has tried to set me at variance with an old friend and crony. There is perhaps a slight balance here in favour of a more settled life, in which it is possible to go out, for instance, and embrace whole-heartedly those glorious days

when clean, white rain swings in billows across the landscape, drenching deliciously: and afterwards to change and have a tub. I always feel that I am losing my opportunities in a caravan, that I cannot make the most of them. For I am very fond of rain.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MEMBERS OF THE UNDERWORLD

THIS is the name that we give to that little corps of scavengers whose humble, gruesome duties minister so continuously to the comfort of our life in SIEGLINDA. My review of our journeys would be quite incomplete did I not deal with this question, as the prompt and wise disposal of odds and ends is a practice not always easily attained by caravanners. And first I must introduce you to Jessica—the derivation of whose name is now wrapped in age-old obscurity. She is a green canvas bucket or bag : to be precise, a fireman's bucket. She is light, collapsible, watertight, and she hangs in the housemaid's cupboard in the kitchen.

Jessica is the universal recipient. Refusal is unknown to her. All's fish that comes into her net. She will collect in a single day, and gulp down out of sight, potato peelings, fish-bones, torn-up letters, plum-stones, fruit-tins, tobacco ash, empty match-boxes, withered flowers, exploded

sparklets, broken crockery, crusts, discarded slippers—indeed it is useless to try and give you any adequate idea of the ground she covers. She is set upon the floor when supper begins, so that leavings of all sorts flash out of sight in a twinkling. She lends her assistance to the cleaning of the stove. The Official Photographer borrows her when she is at work. The Head Mechanic would never dream of sitting down to a job without her by his side. She will sometimes be carried off by the Seamstress. She is the inseparable companion of the Cook. I cannot really speak of Jessica without a grateful emotion. Her quiet, unobtrusive work of absorption, her insatiable appetite, her uncomplaining receptivity are of untold value to us. Once a day, or oftener if the case demands it, she is emptied at some distance from the van, and usually into nettles. And frequently she is washed. That is done by spilling about half a soap powder into her and filling up with boiling water and then stirring vigorously with a stick ; and it is customary also to assemble the other members of the underworld in her interior that none may lose the benefit. The tragedy of Jessica's existence is that she is not allowed to survive the tour. Despite the many rinsings and scrubbings that fall to her lot

there is an impression that by the time the tour is over her course is run and her usefulness exhausted: another little namesake must take her place and claim her peg. And the best tribute that I can pay to her memory is to record the fact, which is without question, that life at home when the tour is over is curiously difficult without her.

The other members are all cloths and rags of varying degrees. They are the wipers, the moppers, the sloppers-up. Originally there was only one of them—the Limit. It was her duty to cope with every form of spill, upset, drip or drain. She was in theory as universal, as undaunted as Jessica herself. But the Limit after a while began to put on airs. I don't quite know how it happened. She did not complain of milk or oil, but she began to draw the line at gravy. And at last she had her way: she got an underling—the Last Straw. Of course she really gained nothing by that, for after a brief, high-class career in her own character, dealing only with her own chosen products, she went inevitably down to the second place herself, where she had all the rough work and none of the easy jobs. For the titles in this department must be regarded rather in the light of rôles to be played than of personalities.

(Jessica is of course a personality.) One rag in its time plays many parts. Having acted as the Limit, and then as the Last Straw, there is yet another office to fill, which has grown up quite lately. For we found that even the Last Straw was not to be the last and lowest. There is a final depth in the form of the Ne Plus Ultra, which is called in to handle the stove when the lamps have been smoking.

It must not be imagined that any of these survive the tour or indeed last out its whole continuance. At very frequent intervals the Ne Plus Ultra finds a resting-place in Jessica—a clean rag is started at the top of the rotation and the others move one down. We have tried many materials and the best of all is a form of cheap rough towel, torn into pieces of about a foot square.

The Scullion has complete charge of all the members of the underworld, for it is sometimes a little confusing, and it is above all necessary that some one should remember which is which.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE JOURNEY'S END

DURING the last week signs that the journey was nearing an end began steadily to grow about us day by day. The second tent was packed into its bag and slung into the net below; then the extra camp furniture was pushed round the corner behind the chest. A new recklessness showed itself in our use of the electric torch, for there was no more call for economy: the laundry-bag grew fat in its corner and encroached upon the wardrobe. But the wardrobe itself was not so crowded as it had been. A day came when my old Norfolk jacket, burst at the elbows for the last time, was hung, with a tender regret, upon a wayside tree, boldly addressed on an accompanying card to the first tramp that should pass by—and not without an old pipe and an ounce of tobacco in the pocket to speed it on its way. For the great company of things that were never meant to survive the tour was shrinking hour by hour. The bedroom mat, the chipped wooden spoon, the cracked butter-plate and a host of

others were left behind and the members of the underworld were washed for the last time. No longer did I accumulate dripping, but rather spent it lavishly : the stock of candles ran down and the rolling-pin and board were washed and stowed away. Indeed a striking change had come over the commissariat department. The back boxes and the larder, which had been stuffed full and bulging with supplies at Inverness, grew lean and empty, so that the few members that remained joggled together on rough roads for lack of packing. All was being brought slowly to a fine point. Only the tinned tongue was treated with respect and allowed to keep its place. For it is our pleasant custom to carry with us always one tinned tongue. We tell each other that it is there in case of emergency, but it is an inherent part of the game that it should come home again unscathed. I fancy that in times of famine we would rather live on bread and water than tap that tongue. And I have sometimes wondered if any special virtue has accrued to it through its travels. Was it not at one time customary to take a cask of sherry round the Horn and back before it could be looked on as mature ? Well, what of a tongue that has been to John o' Groat's ?

At Selkirk we did our shopping in half-stones, half-pounds and half-dozens, for the end was drawing near.

On the Sunday at St. Mary's Loch the weather changed, the temperature dropped fifteen or twenty degrees and wintry showers swept before the wind, turning the sparkling loch to a dark, forbidding grey. Nothing could possibly have been more appropriate. It was what I had hoped for, planned for. To be driven back at the last by the rigours of the autumn storms had been part of my set programme. And at least it may be said that it came off to this extent—the weather did something to let us down gently, to make it as easy for us as it could be made. Certainly in our exposed position it was bitterly cold, and we remained inside for the greater part of the day, overhauling every inch of the interior and tuning up to our best standard of decency and order.

We also, counting in the seventeen miles that remained for the morrow, made sundry calculations of the sum of all our travels. Since we set out for John o' Groat's the total mileage was 2160, occupying 24½ weeks. We had moved on on 128 days and camped on 43. Our longest march was 27 miles. Our biggest week 120. Our best

month 440. The average daily march was just under 17 miles: and our greatest altitude was 1528 feet. Rather an interesting record, and one which I hope will be put down to the credit of the Scottish climate is the number of hours of rain which we actually encountered while on the road—and it must be remembered that we never altered our plans to avoid rain. In the whole of the two summers we had only 55 hours. As we must have spent at least 720 hours in all on the road, this is equivalent to no more than 8 per cent, or, let us say, an average of less than half an hour for every day.

But our proudest record, to my mind, is in the fact that the whole of the journeys were made with the same pair of horses, that we never met with a hill where we had to get assistance, and that never in the course of them were we delayed for a day, or indeed for an hour, through a lame or sick horse.

For my part if I can bring the van and horses back as sound as when they went away, without having any matter to conceal of patches and repairs, I am well content. I have no special interest to spare for the harness. The harness—you will say—is part and parcel of the whole. In my opinion it is an exasperating part and a

most irritating parcel. I do not mean to say that our harness is neglected. It always looks all right, but each set seems to contain enormous unseen possibilities of disruption. Harness is always like that. I think there cannot be any sort of tradesman in the world whose income depends so largely on repairs and so little on new production as that of the saddler. It would, I know, be beyond me to count up the long list of saddlers' shops, dotted here and there throughout the length and breadth of Scotland, with which I have had to do business at one time or another. I did once try to get two new sets before the second journey, but they did not fit and had to be sent back. I shall not try again, for I perceive that by now I am well upon the way to obtaining my new sets by other methods. It cannot be very long, at the present pace, before by gradual replacement of one part at a time, I shall reach that consummation, piecemeal.

But SIEGLINDA was as fair a sight to the eye of those who were to welcome her as she had been when she drove away. Perhaps there is a little less of shine and glitter in her varnish. But I am not sure that she is any the worse for that. And perhaps the steps and under-carriage and the cork carpet at the door have suffered from the long

traffic that has passed over them. But that is honest wear. Even though we did touch the pillar of the suspension bridge near Fort Augustus with the front corner of the roof—and I have been trying to conceal that from you so far—it has been cunningly repaired and leaves no trace behind. Her panels are unscathed; there is no scratch about her uprights; even the little V-shaped projections, where the bar-ends are threaded through, that run like a row of buttons along the base of her frame have lost nothing of their chiselled edges; and if ever you are to get jammed in a gateway these are the first to suffer and be pounded out of shape. There is a new padlock on the larder of course, for we lost the old one at Kingussie, there are new brake-blocks, for the others were destroyed by Sutherland. But take her all in all it is "incredible," as her builder tells me, that she has been that journey and returned like this.

By noon Herbert is ready for the Annual Inspection. Herbert indeed has almost overstepped himself and gone in for sheer extravagances. He must black Simon's feet and polish Sam's: he must fluff out their fore-locks: he performs the most elaborate scheme of decoration on their plaited tails; he must have a ribbon on

his whip. The effect, you may be sure, will lose nothing by his negligence.

It was a glorious morning, very cold with a high wind from the North-East, which fairly drove us home down the valley of the Moffat Water.

We pulled up at the cottage with, as far as we could judge, the largest family, to deposit an interesting and varied assortment of high-class remnants. We discarded, each in its turn, the Ne Plus Ultra, the Last Straw and the Limit. Jessica was with us almost to the last, and now reposes in a wood not two miles from home, where my Partner and I hope before long, on a fine Sunday afternoon, to go over and look her up. We had no shower of rain to dim and dull our perfect radiance. The sun shone all the way, the wind blew keen and white clouds scampered on before us ; for all the world, it seemed, was going our way. We pulled up for lunch eight miles from home, and the front of the van, perfectly sheltered from the wind and pointing to the South-West, was like a sun-bath.

Simon, "slinking along," as Herbert says, with his eyes on the ground, had no idea of his destination. But Sam at the earliest opportunity took a good look across the valley, and it dawned

upon him that all the twists and turns of many weeks had been working up to this—that the long trail had brought him home at last. And after that he needed no touching up to show his paces. In a secret little dell beside a stream Herbert pulled up for the ultimate, mysterious rites. The dishes we had used at lunch were washed in the stream, the van was flicked over with a cloth, the harness was treated to a final rub, and out came the little blacking-pot again for Simon's boots. There I had to stop him, for the time was getting on, and SIEGLINDA is never late.

And so we turned the last corner—and even Simon realized it—and came tooling up the straight.

Herbert turned to me.

"Shall we try this farm to-night?" he said solemnly, as soon as the buildings were in sight. (This is a traditional jest which always signalizes our return.) And I reply that we might try it of course, though it is rather a hungry-looking place.

We can already see the little congress at the lane head that awaits us. . . . Familiar beasts are grazing in the fields on either side. . . . A dog runs out to greet us. . . . We pass the old

beech tree . . . and the iron gate . . . and the hole in the dyke. . . . We run into the assembled group. . . . And we draw up.

It is some time before we make our way down the lane. For the truth is that this also is a hospitable farm, not lacking in warm welcome. After all, there still remains Argyll.

CHAPTER XXX

CARAVAN DAYS

My last object must be to try to sum up what it is that makes Caravan Days different from all others, and how it is they come by the special quality that sets them apart. For they are very different. It is as if, looking back and turning over the pages of all the days that I have left behind, I find them for the most part dulled by the growing distance, misty and indistinct, full of gaps and obscurities. But as I look through that faded gallery I come every here and there upon a bunch of pages which are still clear and bright, where the outlines stand out sharply and the details are not lost: where the pigments have been of more lasting quality and time has not toned them down. These are my Caravan Days.

It is extraordinary how clearly they are remembered. Living through them again, as I have done in this book, I have been able to move freely over well-known ground. I have each one

of them, whole and separate, well within my grasp. I am ready to stand a cross-examination upon them, and I defy my questioner to stump me. I could tell him where it was at our camp at Douglastown—or at any other camp—that I found a safe resting-place when I went in the evening to empty Jessica. I could tell him without a moment's thought in which direction Herbert set off for the milk at Kincardine O'Neil, or whether there was shopping to do at Coldstream, or at which camping-ground the new loop for the ink-bottle was inaugurated, or if there was any rain on the march from Perth to Dunkeld, or where we stopped to pick up water for lunch between Thurso and John o' Groat's. Each day stands out apart like a bead upon a string. That is a quality that Caravan Days share with no others. When I have gone to Venice for the first time or travelled through Canada or visited the Alps or met with any other great and fresh experience, I cannot say months after just what I did from day to day, however clearly I remember the outstanding moments. But it may be that caravanning has no outstanding moments: that all is levelled up to a new plane where nothing specially memorable happens because everything is memorable.

At any rate, it is clear that days that are so completely recalled have been vividly lived and that everything in them has been significant. That is the first truth about Caravan Days. There is nothing in them that does not count. They are free from slack and empty periods. They leave no room for killing time. They are busy days, packed with insistent occupations—days in which there is always much to do and everything is well worth doing. They are beautifully monotonous, and yet no two are the same. And that they stand out, each one apart, is due to the fact that they are divided both by time and space with journeys between camps. They are new days of new habits, a new outlook and a new state of mind and feeling, and they have the power of reaching out and leaving the old things behind. That is their special gift. Worries and problems and cares are not easily eluded even for a few weeks in the year. There are times when it is not possible to travel away from them by train or ship or motor. But it is generally possible to walk away from them beside a caravan. It is given to the caravanner, as the days run on, to find a new proportion in the value of things, for the time being, in which the successful cooking of a supper or climbing of a hill weighs more with

him than all the unsolved questions that he has left at home. I do not say that he would be indifferent to the news, reaching him by telegram, that his house had been burned down (although he ought to be), but at least he would pause to ask himself if that was really as great a calamity as it is held to be. His house is very far away, but the steak is on the table beside him, and it is high time that he lit the Primus.

They are days with a perfect balance, between rest and exertion, labour and reward. Much of their high contentment is due to their system of rewards and prizes. For you will get nothing that is good till you have earned the right to it. If you would smoke a pipe in peace on the road you must push on at a good pace and gain a full mile upon the van to give you time to lie down on the bank till she comes up. Lunch is a special prize after ten miles of steady walking, and whatever difficulties you have had to encounter you may look for your reward at camping time, when the horses go off to their stable and the house is set in order for the night. The happy ceremony of supper—which is the prime reward of the caravanner's day—is in just and full recompense for the labour of the cook. And all the incidents of the long day have paved the way for exquisite

hours of sleep. Sunday in camp is in itself a reimbursement that has fallen due.

We do not travel after all in search of new countries or new experiences, but in search of a new frame of mind, and all the properties of caravanning—hard exercise, fresh air, continual employment, the joyous incidents of the road, the small activities of the camp, the moving panorama of the scenery—all work together toward that frame of mind that we go out to seek. It is distinguished by a rich and equable good humour, a full and genial faculty for taking all things as they come. I have spoken in Chapter XXVI of an evening of heaped-up exasperations such as may occur, but I have given no idea of the perfect serenity and smiling amusement with which they are bound to be met. And in my third chapter I have described a night when I was driven from my bed by an outbreak of jibbing and chittering, and my growing irritation under the ordeal. But I know you will understand that there was no real irritation in that matter. It was a stage anger that possessed me. I was playing the part of the Caravanner at Bay: that was all. As a matter of fact, the broken bootlace of the every-day life is a far more potent disturber than all the insensate turns of fortune that the caravanner has

to face. Whether he is hauling buckets of water up a slippery bank in the rain, or walking three miles after dark to an adjacent village for forgotten letters, or waiting. . . . He has great power of waiting patiently for any length of time when there are complicated enquiries about a camp, or the horses have gone to be shod and the blacksmith is away at his dinner, or when one member of the crew has lost himself on a short cut or gone to ask the way. He knows that there is always plenty of time, and sitting here indefinitely is simply part of the game.

It is a frame of mind of keen enjoyment in the smallest things. The caravanner cannot take them dully for granted as he was wont to do. He has lost that stupid familiarity. It is as if he gets a fresh start and sees things as they really are. He appreciates what a beautiful and simple contrivance a corkscrew is: he can pause to be grateful to the inventor of the tea-infuser: he rejoices in the happy accident by which there are stackyards about farms and disused quarries by moorland roads. He wonders at the great labour and ingenuity of the makers of maps. He delights in the rumble of wheels and the jingling of harness and the clopping of horses' feet. And he has all sorts of fine sensations, which he has rediscovered,

in the feel of his shoes and the fit of his clothes, in washing tingling fingers in clear running water, in working off the stiffness of the morning and forging on ahead with swinging strides, in changing dusty road clothes for evening flannels and getting tired feet into loose slippers, in the spring of the turf and the blaze of the sun and the grateful shade of the trees.

Caravanning does not owe very much to the charms of novelty or the force of comparison. The first days of a tour are good, but not half so good as the last: the journey of the moment is usually the best that we have ever made. For as one's skill, in all the little practices of the craft, increases and expands with long usage the love of it all grows steadily upon one. As every day contributes something new to those that are to follow, experience enriches and advances the life of the Open Road more and more. It is a mistake to put a premium upon Yesterday or to elevate To-day: the best and most desirable of Caravan Days should always be To-morrow.

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MAP OF "SIEGLINDA'S" JOURNEYS

The author's route is in red. Other roads in black

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